

three brigades were put into action: 1st, 2nd and 5th. The KOVO cover plan assumed a rather complicated "castling", namely: the 5th

PTABR from the Belokorovich region (60 km northeast of Novograd Volynsky) is moving westward in a forced march, to the town of Torchin near the Vladimir-Volynsky highway, Luts'k. The

1st PTABR from the Rovno region, Luts'k goes south, to the town of Sokoluvka (north of the Busk,

Brody highway). The 2nd PTABR from the Tarnopol, Skalat area is moving west to Vinniki (a southeastern

suburb of Lvov). In fact, by the time the war began, the 5th PTABR was not equipped with equipment and weapons, and according to the calculation of time, it would not have had time to travel 250 km to the planned concentration area. Based on this, the commander of the 5th Army forbade the "castling" of the 1st PTABR to the south; the brigade remained in the pre-war deployment area and entered the battle on the Vladimir-Volynsky-Luts'k highway (these events will be discussed in the next chapter). However, there remained the 2nd PTABR and the Tarnopol, Kremenets, Dubno highway, along which the brigade could go either directly to Dubno, or through Kremenets, Kozin to Berestechko. Another possible route of advance is along the highway from Tarnopol to Zolochiv, Brody, Leshnev. The distance in both cases does not exceed 150 km, low-speed tractors at a speed of 8 km / h could crawl it in one light day, adjusted for the orders and organization of the Red Army - in two days.

As "everyone knows", the PTABRs did not manage to receive the means of mechanized thrust they were entitled to before the start of the war, and that's why they could not fight. Unfortunately, no one has yet tried to answer the question: why didn't they have time? What got in the way? For the full staffing of five PTABRs according to the staffing standards, 825 tractors were required. Another priority recipient is the mechanized corps; there were eight of them in KOVO (even counting the emerging 24th, in which there was nothing to pull), and for a full staffing they needed a total of 2816 tractors. Even before the start of open mobilization, there were 6865 tractors in the troops of

the district. Where is the unsolvable problem? It is also appropriate to recall that an artillery tractor is not a unique technique, not an aircraft, not a tank, and not a radio station; as a tractor for medium-caliber guns, ordinary agricultural tractors, of which there were many thousands on collective farm fields, could be used (and were widely used throughout the war). Finally, to tow those four divisions of the artillery brigade that were armed with 76-mm guns, any

truck (the weight of the gun is one and a half tons, like a car without passengers).

The most important thing is that this whole "theory" has nothing to do with the practice of the combat (non) use of the 2nd PTABr: as of June 18, Skalat (i.e., in the brigade's deployment area) from the resources of the center had 25 heavy diesel ST-2s and 68 STZ-5s, 250 three-ton ZIS-5 trucks and 200 GAZ-AA lorries were shipped. [192] Thus, the issue of towing 72 guns (it is not yet a fact that all of them were available) of 85 mm and 107 mm caliber was completely resolved by the available number of tractors; the "three-inch" remaining without a caterpillar tractor could be transported (and at a much higher speed) by motor vehicles. Alas, none of this was done in reality... **15th mechanized corps** As already mentioned, "the final

defeat of the

enemy's mechanized units" in accordance with the pre-war plans were to be inflicted by the mechanized corps. The 4th mechanized corps (operationally subordinate to the command of the 6th Army) and the 15th mechanized corps (reserve of the front command) were closer to the breakthrough zone of the 48th TK of the Wehrmacht. An attempt to act "according to the charter" was made - on the afternoon of June 22, by a combat order (b / n) of the South-Western Front, the commander of the 6th Army was ordered to "**units of the 4th mechanized corps from the Zholkev region to deliver a strong counterattack and destroy the enemy together with detachment 15 th mechanized corps, allocated to eliminate the enemy airborne assault in Radzechow.**" [193] However, the commander of the 6th Army, Lieutenant General Muzychenko, was not one of those who easily parted with his blood; as a result, not a mechanized corps, and not one of its divisions, but two tank battalions of the 32nd TD and one rifle battalion of the 81st MD were sent to operate in the "alien defense zone". Let us note a detail

characteristic of the relationship between Stalin's generals: Opersvodka No. 01 of the headquarters of the 6th Army says: "**At 16 hours 30 minutes, two tank battalions and a motorized infantry battalion from the 81st MD were allocated from the 32nd MD for a counterattack in the direction of Radzechow.**" [194]

However, the report of the commander of the 32nd Panzer Division indicated a completely different time: "**At 23 o'clock, the third battalions of tank regiments, on the basis of the order of the commander of the 4th mechanized corps, set out for the area of Cape Holojow with the task of defeating the enemy in the Radzechow area.**" [181] They smashed the enemy (with activity and results, which will be discussed later) for one day on June 23, and on June 24 they received an order to return to their divisions.

Thus, the main protagonist of the battle at Radkhezuv, Berestechko was to become one 15th

The 15th mechanized corps was confidently included in the group of "three heroes" (4 MK, 8 MK, 15 MK) of the South-Western Front. The main striking force of the corps was the "old" personnel 10th Panzer Division under the command of Major General Ogurtsov. As of June 1, 1941, the division had in good condition: 63 KV tanks (of which 57 units were "1st category", i.e. brand new), 38 T-34 tanks (all 1st category), 40 three-tower T-28s, 168 light BT-7s, 25 T-26s (including 8 flamethrowers), a total of 334 tanks. More than two times more than in the German 11th Panzer Division with incomparably higher performance characteristics. And also: 56 BA-10 cannon armored vehicles, 27 light BA-20, 86 tractors (including 30 "Voroshilovtsev"), 908 trucks and 43 cars, 74 tankers, 13 "regimental" radios 5-AK on a car chassis and 4 powerful RSB radios. [195]

The newly formed (on the basis of the 18th tank brigade) 37th tank division under the command of Colonel Anikushkin received much less new equipment: 1 KV tank and 34 T-34 tanks. The main weapons were light tanks: 254 BT-7, 23 T-26 (all of the "2nd category"), in total there were 312 combat-ready tanks in the division. There were very few armored vehicles: 14 BA-10s and 10 BA-20s. As in all new mechanized formations, the main problem was the low staffing of vehicles and means of mechanized artillery; as of June 1, the division included: 31 tractors, 329 trucks, 154 special and 18 passenger vehicles, 86 tankers (by this indicator, the division was inferior to few). There were traditionally a lot of radio communications: 17 5-AK radios and 2 powerful, but technically outdated 11-AK at that time. [196]

The motorized division of the 15th mechanized corps (212th mechanized division) was much weaker. The tank regiment of the division was at the initial stage of formation and managed to receive only 32 BT and 5 T-26; the reconnaissance battalion of the division, however, was equipped with the latest T-40 amphibious tankettes at full strength (17 units). The August report of the command of the mechanized corps states that the 212th MD, ***"having an almost complete supply of personnel for the Red Army, had absolutely no vehicles for transporting personnel and could not even provide itself with vehicles for the transport of ammunition, food and fuel and lubricants ... The artillery regiment had 8 76-mm guns, 16 122-mm howitzers and 4 152-mm howitzers (eight 152-mm howitzers are not enough for full staffing. - M.S.), and there were only traction means for one division, and then without rears "***.

It is difficult to believe in this, since there is a "Statement of Availability" dated June 1, 1941. In accordance with this document, the division had (and by June 22

could become even more) 174 trucks and 64 special vehicles, 53 tractors (2 ° CTZ-5, 27 "Komsomol" and 6 heavy "Comintern"). **[206]** In any case, the absence of all the necessary motorized division of motor transport hardly significantly affected the fighting (quotation marks would be very appropriate here) vanished like mist. By June 22, the staffing of the 15 MK formations had noticeably improved (compared to the report on June 1). The total number of armored vehicles

increased to 177, special vehicles became 549, in the column "transport vehicles" (it is difficult to say whether tractors and / or cars were included here) there is the number 1919. In terms of the number of personnel (33,935 people, i.e. 94% of the state) 15 MK was in first place among all the mechanized corps of the South-Western Front. **[197]**

Like most other formations of the South-Western Front, there are almost no primary documents (orders, operational reports, combat reports) of the 15th mechanized corps (the word "almost" means the presence of single scattered documents in the archives of the front headquarters or the armored control department). However, there are three huge, dozens of pages, reports on the combat operations of the corps and each of its tank divisions, compiled in August 1941 **[198, 199, 200]**. Compiled beyond the Dnieper, hundreds of kilometers from the scene, after the actual defeat and on the eve disbanding connections. These three reports were included in the well-known series "Collection of Combat Documents of the Great Patriotic War", formally declassified already in 1964, actually published for the general public in the early 90s. They are textbook known to specialists, have been repeatedly cited in books, and are available on the Internet. Unfortunately, this is the case when the abundance of words makes it even

more unclear. The first question in order is connected with the spatial position of the parts of the corps by the time the war began. As noted in the previous chapter, on June 18-20, in the formations (at least in some of them) of the 6th Army and the 4th mechanized corps, the process of concentrating and withdrawing troops to the initial areas determined by the cover plan began. However, in the 15th MK, directly subordinate to the command of the district (front), for some reason nothing of the kind happened. As a result, by the morning of June 22, the tank divisions of the corps were in their places of permanent deployment: the 10th TD in Zolochiv, the 37th TD in Kremenets, at a distance of 75 km (in a straight line, not on roads) from each other. At the same time, an artillery regiment and an anti-aircraft division of the 10th TD were located at a

the location of the main forces of the division), and the motorized rifle regiment of the 37th TD was in Berezhany (100 km southwest of Kremenets). The pontoon-bridge battalions of tank divisions were at the training camp on the river. Dniester south of Lvov.

The combat alert was announced after the actual start of the war (at 4-45 according to the report of the mechanized corps or at 5-45 according to the report of the 10th TD). The commanders opened the "red package" with a pre-drawn order of the Military Council of the KOVO dated May 31, 1941. The order for the 37th TD was found in the archival fund of the armored department of the SWF. Although the document is adorned with the stamp "Special Importance. Top secret", there is nothing sensational there - quite ordinary tasks that correspond to the general plan for covering the district: **"1. To cover the**

mobilization, concentration and deployment of the KOVO troops, the border units received the task of preventing the enemy from invading the territory of the district by stubborn defense of the fortifications along the line of the State Border.

2. The 15th mechanized corps with the 1st PTABR (KOVO reserve) is concentrated by 24.00 M-1 in the Sokoluvka,

Zolochiv, Brody area. 3. The 37th TD, having prepared for combat alert, set out 3 hours after the announcement of the alarm from the points of [permanent] deployment and concentrate by 15.00 M-1 in the area ... (the following is a list of tiny places 5–10 km southwest of Brody)". [201] By the

evening of June 22, the advanced columns of the tank divisions of the corps reached the highway line in the Olesko-Brody strip, while units of the 10th TD traveled 20–30 km, and units of the 37th TD more than 50–60 km. The 212th MD, according to the report of the command of the mechanized corps, advanced from Brody and took up defensive positions along the right (eastern) bank of the river. Steep from Bordulyaki to the upper reaches.

The exceptional small number of German aviation in the SWF zone made it possible to make this march with minimal (two people were killed in the 37th TD) losses from air strikes - and this is in a situation where the anti-aircraft division of the 10th TD remained in Janow, and the anti-aircraft division of the 37th and etc. had only one battery (4 guns) of 37-mm guns. The main "losses" were due to the initial dispersion of parts of the corps: the 10th TD advanced without an artillery regiment, the 37th TD without a motorized rifle regiment, and in the artillery regiment of the division, most of the guns (21 122 mm howitzers) were left in the cantonment place due to lack of tractors [75]. Based on the conditions of the terrain and the availability of roads, it

was possible to bring the 15th mechanized corps into battle in at least two ways. The sensible and prudent option was to use the trunk

highway Brody, Dubno and country roads, concentrate 15 MK in the Leshnev, Ostrow area in readiness to counterattack the enemy at the crossings over the river. Styr. Another way to the east, except through the river. Styr, 48 TK did not have a Wehrmacht, and the scheme of the road network quite convincingly (even without the presence of Stirlitz in the German headquarters) suggested that the enemy would go to Berestechko and Shurovitsa. A decisive and bold option would involve the advancement of the corps to the west along the Brody, Busk, Lvov highways and after that, together with 4 MK, delivering a crushing blow to the flank and rear of the main enemy grouping along one of two highways: Zholkev, Krystynopol, Sokal or, more deeper, Zholkiew, Rava-Ruska, Tomaszow, Zamosc.

In reality, however, a different decision was made. No explanations for it (explanations of such a choice) could be found. One gets the impression that the front headquarters looked at the map, found that three points - the area of concentration of 15 MK, Radzechow and Sokal - lie on one straight line, and resolutely drew a red arrow. Further, the "arrow" turned into Combat Order No. 01 of the headquarters of the 15th mechanized corps dated 9-00 on June 23. It was supposed **to "strike in the direction of Radzekhuv, Byszow (settlement 8 km east of Perespa. - M.S.) , Sokal to destroy the enemy's Sokal grouping, preventing it from withdrawing to the western bank of the river. Boog. [202]** That's it! The main thing is that the enemy does not run away ...

In war, however, the shortest road "from point A to point B" is not always a straight line. Before engaging the enemy at Radzechow, the corps' panzer divisions had to travel 40–50 km through a swampy forest cut through by many small streams. Not an easy task, especially considering the lack of pontoon-bridge battalions and the presence of 50-ton KV tanks in service. Difficult does not mean impossible. In the summer of 1944, during the operation "Bagration", tank formations of the 1st Belorussian Front fought over 400 km along the absolute impassability of the Belarusian Polesie. In June 1941, tank units of the 48th TK of the Wehrmacht, too, did not fly by air from Radzekhuv to Berestechko, from Berestechko to Dubno. In a tank division - both German and Soviet - the vast majority of personnel are outside the tanks, so there was someone to do reconnaissance of advance routes, the construction of gates, crossings, passages and clearings. However, this time too "theoretical considerations" are superfluous. The ability to walk 40 km through the forest between the Bug and Styr rivers

was practically proven on the very first day of the war. In the report on the hostilities of the 10th TD we read:

“At 09:50, the forward detachment of the division, consisting of the 3rd battalion of the 20th tank regiment and the 2nd battalion of the 10th motorized rifle regiment, set out along the Ozhidov route (a settlement near the highway 6 km west of Olesko. - M. S.) , Sokolowka, Toporuv, Radzechow with the task of eliminating enemy airborne landings in the Radzechow area ... By the end of 22.6.41, the advance detachment occupied Radzechow and went on the defensive on the northwestern and southern outskirts of Radzechow. And that is not all. On the same day, “the reconnaissance patrol of the forward detachment in the amount of 6 tanks, having reached the Korchin area (settlement near the road Krystynopol, Radzechow, 12 km east of the border. - M.S.) , at 22 o’clock met with the enemy with a force of up to two infantry battalions with

anti-tank guns; as a result of the battle, 6 enemy anti-tank guns were destroyed and up to an infantry platoon. [199] In the early morning of June 23, the forward detachment of the 10th TD entered into battle with units of the 11th Wehrmacht Panzer Division that had approached Radzekhuv. This was the first tank battle in the South-Western Front - and the last battle of 15 MK tanks with enemy tanks. The fight was uneven. The German tank division (although at that time far from the entire division approached Radzechow) was opposed not by the mechanized corps, and not by one of its divisions, but by only one tank and one rifle battalion, and the tank battalion was the "third". This is a very important clarification. According to the staffing table, the tank regiment of the Soviet tank division consisted of four battalions. The first is a battalion of heavy tanks (31 KV), the second and third are battalions of medium tanks (51 T-34s each), the fourth is a battalion of flamethrower tanks (27 OT-26s and 11 cannon T-26s). But since there were only 38 T-34 tanks in the entire 10th Panzer

Division, the third battalions were armed mainly with BT light tanks with bulletproof armor. In the report of the 10th TD, the tank battle near Radzekhuv is described as follows: ***“At 05:15, the forward detachment was attacked from the direction of m. Standing with enemy tanks (up to 100 units) [supported by] up to two batteries of heavy artillery and up to a division of anti-tank guns. At 0630 hours the forward detachment was attacked by another group of tanks from the Józefów direction. At the same time, the enemy bombed and machine-gunned from the air (5 aircraft). The forward detachment held the line they occupied until 13:30 and, having used up their ammunition, retreated to the Maidan Stary line (settlement 14 km south of Radzekhuv. - M.S.) . Up to 20 enemy tanks and 16 anti-tank guns were destroyed.” [199]*** Own losses are not indicated, but the report of the me

The description of the battle in the ZhBD 48 TK of the Wehrmacht coincides with this one up to minutes. True, the German description is more lengthy and emotional:

"05.30. The tank avant-garde of the corps advanced to the Radzechow region and, north of this settlement, ran into the resistance of the enemy's motorized units, operating with the support of tanks. Our aerial reconnaissance detected the movement of these formations from the Holojow region and southeast in the direction of Radziechow. Parts of the corps were involved in the first tank battle for him. The 15th Panzer Regiment, having taken its starting position in an enveloping maneuver, is advancing towards Radzechow. The enemy puts up stubborn resistance and counterattacks, regardless of their own losses.

Around 12.30 the first tank battle was basically over, the enemy was driven back to the south with heavy losses. There are up to 30 destroyed tanks on the battlefield, but their own losses are significant. However, the very results of the won tank battle inspire confidence in the troops and raise morale ... " Further, in the final

report for June 23: ***" ... Experience in combat operations: 1. For***

our troops, the fanatical resistance of Russian tankers was unexpected. Our tanks and anti-tank weapons clearly outnumber the enemy's light tanks, yet the latter usually continue to attack despite losses. Even if the situation is hopeless, the engine and tracks are broken, the Russian tank continues to fire until the last shell or resumes the battle, letting its own tanks pass. Almost all tankers in the broken enemy tanks are found killed or burnt out [76]. 2. The enemy uses high-speed heavy tanks equipped with a

76.2-mm cannon (this is a description of the first meeting with the T-34) , which perfectly hit targets at long distances. These vehicles are clearly superior to our own tanks (highlighted by me. - M.S.). The 37 mm anti-tank gun is only effective at short ranges; an 88 mm anti-aircraft gun is completely useless at distances above average. [188]

The appearance of a new, and even "clearly superior" type of Soviet tanks seriously alarmed the Germans. On June 24, the rear department of the 1st Tank Group sends a special report about this to the rear department of the GA "South"; the document is notable primarily for the fact that it contains a specific figure for the loss of tanks of

the 11th TD in the battle near Radzechow :

knocked out at the cost of 7 own. Among the Russian tanks [revealed] a new type, previously unknown ... Prepare everything necessary for towing and repair. [203] So, there was no doubt that there was a battle between the forward detachment of the 10th TD of the 15th Mechanized Corps and the 11th German Panzer Division near Radzekhuv. As for the participation in the battle of the repeatedly mentioned above group of two tank and one motorized rifle battalions of the 4th mechanized corps, questions arise here. In the August report of the commander of the 32nd Panzer Division, he is described as follows:

“Two tank battalions, in cooperation with a motorized rifle battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Lysenko, from 07:00 to 20:00 fought with the 65th tank battalion and the 25th battery of anti-tank guns of the enemy in the area of the western outskirts of Radzechow, Ganunin, where the 10th tank fought division. As a result of the battle, 18 enemy tanks, 5 anti-tank guns, 10 guns and a motorized infantry platoon were destroyed. The loss of the tank group is 11 tanks. [181]

It is difficult to correlate this with the documents of the enemy, and even with common sense. The numbers of the Wehrmacht units named in the report of the 32nd TD are clearly fictitious and absurd (the anti-tank batteries did not have their own numbers, there were separate tank battalions with their own numbers, but not in the 1st Tank Group); The mentioned duration of the battle (from 07:00 to 20:00) most likely indicates that the compiler of the report did not have any specific information about the event.

The ZhBD of the 81st Motorized Division indicated a different and more plausible time: **“At 15.00**

on June 23, the 1st battalion of the 323rd SME with two [tank] battalions of the 32nd TD attacked the enemy in the Radziechow area. The enemy suffered heavy losses. 1/323 MRR lost 13 men killed and 18 wounded. At 19.00, the enemy, up to an infantry brigade with tanks and artillery, launched an offensive against the battalion. The battalion retreated to the line of Wola Holoevska.

In the ZhBD of the German 48 TK there is no mention at all, even the slightest, of the hostilities in the Radzechow area on the afternoon of June 23. But there is this entry:

“18.30 ... The [11th Panzer] division established contact with the advanced units of the 297th Infantry Division (the right neighbor of the 48th TK. - M.S.), advancing from Pavluv. The advanced units of the division reached Radziechow today and replaced the 231st reconnaissance battalion (11th division) and a company of the 61st anti-tank battalion (11th division) , which were guarding there ... ” [188]

So, after the end of the battle with the advance detachment of the 10th Panzer Division, the German 11th Panzer Division left a barrier in Radzechow with minimal forces: a reconnaissance battalion (i.e., a reduced infantry battalion) and one company (12 "beaters") of an anti-tank battalion. If this barrier had actually been attacked by two tank battalions of the 32nd TD (and this is about 100 tanks, most of which were T-34s) [77], then the Germans would have noticed, felt and reflected such an outstanding event in documents. Finally, the very intonation of sincere admiration for the courage of the enemy, with which the tank battle at Radzechow is described in the ZhBD of the German tank corps, suggests that the enemy (i.e., Red Army units) was in the minority - the Germans would hardly have become so admired if on hundreds of "thirty-fours" hit them ... Most likely, the participation of the battle group of the 4th mechanized corps in the battle was reduced to the fact that some (smaller) part

of the group reached Radzekhow and in the late afternoon was attacked by enemy infantry approaching the city (" **enemy numbering up to an infantry brigade with tanks and artillery** "); after a short battle, units of 4 MK rolled back, that's all

ended.

Strictly speaking, this ended the entire participation of the 15th mechanized corps in the "grand tank battle in Western Ukraine." Then something began that was unique even for June 1941. For five long days (June 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), two tank divisions of the corps crawled through the forest, writing out intricate zigzags, now approaching, then moving away from Radzekhow (see incl., Fig. 6). At first glance at the diagram, the route of this "offensive" resembles a drawing of a 3-year-old child scribbling paper with colored pencils (5-year-olds are already drawing something more meaningful). Having repeatedly read the description of these marches in the reports of the command of the 15th MK, the meticulous reader will be able to catch some very dubious "logic" of what happened.

In the most concise statement, the matter was as follows: the 10th TD was divided into two groups, the core of which was the 20th and 19th tank regiments. The 19th immediately got stuck in the swamp near Turze and spent most of the day there on June 23, the 20th regiment crept along a winding route through Toporov to Cape Holojow and allegedly (there is no mention of this in enemy documents) tried to attack in the direction of Radzechow. The next day, the high command decided to withdraw the mechanized corps to the east, to Brody, Radziwiŏjow, but then changed their mind and ordered them to return back to Kholojów and Okhladów. Then the division gathered with forces to go on the offensive, then the mechanized corps received an order to withdraw right up to Zalizhtsy Nova

Brody), then changed their minds and decided to attack again; in the early morning of June 27, the corps received the infamous "stop order" from the SWF command, which was immediately canceled a couple of hours later (this will be discussed in more detail below) and replaced by an order to advance on Berestechko. Meanwhile, the 37th TD, driven by orders from the corps and the front, repeatedly crossed the Radostavka River in different places and directions, either "advancing", then "covering" the 10th TD, or "attacking" the mythical German tanks south of Toporuv ...

The enemy observed these strange "tank movements" with slight bewilderment, not forgetting, however, to advance small infantry barriers to the borders of forest streams along the line of Radzechow, Lopatin, Leshnev. In the Journal of Combat Operations 48 of the Wehrmacht TC we

read: **"June 24. Around 07.00 aerial reconnaissance for the first time reports a large concentration of enemy tank forces south of the road [Radzechow - Shurowice], as countermeasures, the command of 11 TD allocates one tank company (estimate the scale. - M.S.) to cover in the area south of**

Lopatin. ... During the day, our air reconnaissance repeatedly received information about the accumulation of a large number of enemy tank and motorized forces in the area south of Radzechow and Leshnev ... Toward evening, 57th infantry division received an instruction by phone: on June 25, following 297 infantry division, take on the task of covering the southern flank of the corps . To do this, the division must set up barriers on the roads leading from the south

in the Lopatin and Leshnev area with two reinforced battalions. June 25 15-00. Reinforced battalions of the 57th Infantry Division arrived in Lopatin and Leshnev. Intelligence established the presence of the enemy south of the crossings ... The danger to the right flank of the corps has not yet been completely eliminated. The enemy has already tried to inflict pinpricks with

The mention of "pin pricks with small forces" is possibly associated with two episodes of the actions of the 10th TD. In the August report of the command divisions are described as follows:

"June 25 ... To counter the enemy's large reconnaissance detachments, the commander of the 20th tank regiment allocated a group of 15 tanks, and then a counterattack was carried out by the forces of the 20th tank and motorized rifle regiments, supported by two batteries of the 10th howitzer artillery regiment. In the depths of the enemy's anti-tank defense, our units were met with exceptionally strong

artillery fire. With the release of our tanks, enemy tanks (there were no German tanks in the Kholoyuv, Okhladuv region for a long time, the 11th TD had occupied Dubno by that time, the 16th TD marched behind it, crossing Styr in the Shurovice region. - *M.S.*) **did not accept the battle and retreated beyond the line of heights, where the enemy had a strong anti-tank defense. As a result of the battle, according to the commanders of the fortified area (?), they counted 56 crushed and knocked out anti-tank guns and 5 knocked out enemy tanks in the attack area. Our losses: 4 KV tanks, 7 BT tanks ... June 26 ... The 19th Tank**

Regiment at 10 o'clock on a private initiative (as in the text. - *M.S.*) of the regiment commander, Lieutenant Colonel Proleev, attacked the enemy in the height area southeast of Radzechow. In the Denbina Okhladovskie area (settlement 3 km north of Okhladuv. - *M.S.*), **the regiment was met by organized fire from anti-tank guns. As a result of the attack, up to 70 anti-tank guns** (i.e., anti-tank weapons of one Wehrmacht infantry division almost in full strength. - *M.S.*) , **18 tanks (???) and up to an infantry battalion were destroyed. Regiment losses: 9 KV tanks and 5 BT-7 tanks... After a partial attack, the regiment retreated to its**

original position... "[199] Suppose that, unlike many other things, reports of our own losses are not fiction. In this case, carefully summing up the figures from the report, we learn that the 10th Panzer Division lost in battle during June 23-26: 13 KV, 6 T-34, 32 BT, and a total of 51 tanks. The task for the first grader is how many tanks are left in the division? The answer contained in the report of the command of the mechanized corps is 39 (thirty nine) units. **"By the end of 26.6.41, parts of the corps had: the 10th Panzer Division - KV tanks - 10, T-34 - 5, T-28 - 4, BT-7 - 20 pieces."** [198] Taking as the initial number of serviceable tanks indicated in the June (pre-war) statement, there is an unknown absence of 244 tanks, including 40 KV and

27 T-34s. There were no combat losses (as well as combat clashes with the enemy) in the 37th TD at all. 26 tanks (1 KV, 15 BT-7 and 10 T-26) were left in the pre-war cantonment area in Kremenets. Of these, only 8 BT were listed in the average repair; why all the rest are left is not said in the report. But let's not find fault with trifles, especially since the "tank case" in the 37th TD was very, very modest: by the morning of June 28, the division had as many as 211 tanks, including 26 T-34s. [200] "Only" 75 units were missing. Of course, after the very first attempt to go on a decisive offensive (June 28), the size of the "case" increased sharply, but this will be discussed a little later.

While not a single anti-tank artillery brigade appeared on the path of advancement of the 48th tank corps of the Wehrmacht, and the 15th MK rushed through forests and swamps, Soviet aviation became practically the only enemy of the German tankers. Even with the intensity with which it was used (1 sortie for 2-3 aircraft per day could be considered a rare achievement in the bomber regiments of the Air Force of the South-Western Front), air strikes turned out to be very noticeable. On June 24, the commander of the 11th Panzer Division reported to the corps headquarters:

“Air strikes inflicted on a tank division crowded on one march road and moving through a narrow passage, in addition to a significant slowdown in progress, caused heavy losses in people and property. The division has so far recorded 10 killed and 50 wounded, most of them seriously wounded. In addition, according to incomplete data, 16 vehicles were lost, among them the most valuable materiel, for example, heavy tractors ... I insistently ask that a higher authority take care of providing sufficient fighter cover ... ”[204] The request remained unanswered . In ZhBD 48 TK we read: “June 24, 08.00 11

TD reports on constant enemy air raids on bridges in the Shurovice area and the highway. Despite the fact that the corps command has repeatedly asked the Tank Group for air cover, fighters are allocated for these purposes on a limited scale ...

At about 1000, the 61st motorcycle battalion set out from the bridgehead area in the Ostrow area, and the 110th MRP set out from the bridgehead area in the Shurovice area. Their progress along the road is greatly slowed down by

enemy air raids... June 25 As expected by the corps command, the Russian Air Force, realizing the situation, has been constantly attacking the corps' units that have advanced far ahead since early morning. Our advance is still slowed down by these attacks...”

However, even this "slow motion" took place at a pace of 20-25 km per day. At 07:30 on the morning of June 25, advanced units of the 11th TD approached Dubno, at 11:00 the battle began, and at 14:10 a report was received that the city had been taken. At the same time (25 June 14:00), the corps headquarters moved to Berestechko. On the evening of June 24, the 16th Panzer Division reached Radzechow, where it was forced to stop due to the congestion of the road to Shurovitsa; after the vigorous intervention of the corps command, the rear units of the 11th TD were driven to the country road Stoyanuv,

Berestechko, and by 19 o'clock on June 25, the 16th TD was already in the area of crossings over the river. Stay at Shurovice. In the early morning of June 26, the tank regiment of the 16th TD, marching in the forefront, reached the crossroads of the Berestechko, Kremenets road with the main highway (Brody, Dubno highway).

In Dubno, the Germans captured not only mountains of abandoned weapons (including 42 heavy 210-mm howitzers), but also fuel, precious for the advancing motorized units: 5.2 thousand cubic meters of gasoline and 420 cubic meters of diesel fuel. [205] Of course, there were those "who are supposed to" in Dubno. But the warehouses were not blown up, because until the last minute before the retreat they were busy with their usual work.

A large prison in Dubno began to be built in the mid-30s, and it was supposed to be the third largest in Poland. The prison was completed after the "liberation campaign". In the course of deep socio-political transformations, from 1.5 to 2 thousand prisoners were simultaneously in the prison, but shortly before June 22, another stage was sent to Siberia by rail, and the prison was almost "empty" - about 400 people remained in it, convicted and under investigation. ***"24.06 at 10 a.m. in the morning they were informed by phone that wagons would be sent to send the ZK under counter-revolutionary***

articles. For this number of ZK for c / r Art. convicts and investigators, there were 320 people. The wagons for sending the ZK arrived on June 24 at 17.00, at that time the city of Dubno was bombarded and shelled by the enemy, and also, according to the head of the garrison, that the enemy was attacking the city of Dubno from the Verba metro station, consisting of 127 tankettes ...

In view of the sudden situation, in order to take measures to the ZK, I contacted the deputy. head of the UNKVD for the Rivne region, lieutenant of state security comrade Klimov, who at that time was in the regional party committee. Tov. Klimov gave an order by phone if it was impossible to evacuate the intended contingent of the ZK to be sent to destroy, and the rest of the prisoners to be released ... head of the UNKVD for the destruction of the ZK under Art. kr, but since the enemy occupied the Dubno station and continued to advance on the city, [I could not destroy] all the ZKs that were to be destroyed, about 60–70 people remained closed in the cells ... " Apparently, the head of the Dubna prison himself (whose report, sent on June 28 to the head of the prison department of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR, cited above) did

not know the entire scope of the work done, since the living in the prison were found, but in much smaller numbers.

“Early in the morning on July 27, 1941, an inspection of the Dubno prison was carried out. By this time, the prison was already captured by local residents, whose relatives were still in the prison premises. The prison cells, in which the bodies of those who were shot lay, were also broken into by the inhabitants. Their goal was to take out the bodies of the executed relatives, which was done with the help of wagons. The picture that opened up to those who entered the casemates of the prison was terrible - it is simply impossible to describe it in words. There were corpses shot and mutilated with bayonets everywhere... How cruelly they tortured, tortured and tortured innocent political prisoners, says the discovery made during the cleaning of prison cells and the removal of the bodies of prisoners: completely torn off skin of a human hand was found, on which fingernails were still located. In addition, a human

foot was found with patches of skin still hanging on it ... It was found that some prisoners (in another document their number is defined as 8 people. - M.S.) were able to avoid execution or escaped with injuries. The wounded are in a private clinic in Dubno. They, as well as those who managed to escape, were interrogated and testified that the executions were carried out at about 10 pm on Tuesday June 24, 1941. The survivors were able to save themselves by breaking down the doors in the cells or breaking through the walls with the help of a radiator ... Probably, due to the noise raised, the prison guards decided to finish off all those who remained, which was done at dawn on Wednesday, June 25 ... ”[207

For complete clarity, it must be clarified that the Nazis did not at all intend to turn the building into a "museum of the history of totalitarianism"; nothing like that - they needed the prison for work. ***“Although all the doors in the cells were broken, on separate floors of the prison premises it was possible to create conditions for keeping prisoners in a closed space. In total, four floors with 118 chambers of medium and large area were prepared for these purposes. After carrying out these measures, the prison can be considered ready to receive political and other prisoners ... ”***

The 8th mechanized corps While the tank divisions of the 15th mechanized corps wandered in small steps through the forest in the “enchanted triangle” Radzechow, Busk, Brody (this triangle is not too large, with sides of 35–40 km), the third “tank hero” was moving to the place of the future battle in a wide, sweeping zigzag, like a skier in

a giant slalom. On the eve of the war, the 8th mechanized corps of Lieutenant General Ryabyshev was stationed southwest of Lvov, in the Drohobych and Str

to the April and May (1941) versions of the Strategic Deployment Plan, the "diamond" 8 MK appears at the very tip of the "Lvov ledge", and the red arrow from it stretches to Krakow. This is the direction of the main blow. The role that the mechanized corps was to play in the upcoming offensive can be judged both by the rank of commander (lieutenant general, and this at a time when the neighboring 5th Army was commanded by a major general), and by equipping the corps with military and auxiliary equipment.

8 MK began its formation in the "first wave" of mechanized corps (in July 1940) as part of the 12th and 15th tank, 7th motorized divisions. As in the neighboring 4th MK, in the spring of 1941 one of these divisions (15th TD) was transferred to the emerging 16th MK, and the new 34th Tank Division, created on the basis of the 26th Tank Brigade, was included in the 8th MK.

After these castlings, the "old" 12th TD became the main striking force of the corps. As of June 1, 1941, the division had (counting only serviceable tanks) 58 KV, 98 T-34, 102 BT, 77 T-26 (including 16 flamethrower), a total of 335 tanks ready for battle. In terms of the number of "new types" tanks, the 12th TD was in third place among the tank divisions of the Kyiv OVO. By the number of tractors (125 units, including 30 "Voroshilov") - on the first. In addition, the division received 54 BA-10 cannon armored vehicles, 20 BA-20 light vehicles, 933 trucks and 26 cars (including the executive ZIS-101 and Mercedes), 75 tank trucks.

The motorized division of the corps was formed on the basis of the twice Red Banner Order of the Red Banner of Labor of the 7th Rifle Division named after M.V. Frunze. As of June 1, 1941, the division had 935 trucks, 151 special and 35 cars, 43 serviceable armored vehicles of various types, 121 tractors (not counting 33 under repair) and 136 motorcycles. The tank regiment of the division was weakly manned, it included "only" 83 serviceable BT tanks [78]; on the other hand, the reconnaissance battalion received a supernumerary number of amphibious tanks (28 units), including 11 of the latest T-40s. The 34th Panzer Division was worse armed than

all those tank formations that were discussed earlier. The basis of the armament of the division was light tanks T-26, in good condition there were 241 units (including 30 flamethrower ones). Possessing the same armament (45-mm cannon) and the same bulletproof armor as the BT, the T-26 tank was noticeably inferior to it in speed and mobility. Of the new tanks, there were only 8 heavy KV units. In addition, the division was armed with 26 BT tanks and 48 five-tower T-35 giants. During parades on Red Square, this monster made an indelible impression on the public, but it is difficult to judge its combat potential: having an exceptionally powerful

armament (1 76-mm cannon, 2 45-mm cannons, 2 machine guns), this tank with bulletproof armor and huge dimensions became a "training target" for enemy anti-tank guns. **[208]**

As of June 3, 1941, the 34th TD had only 42 tractors and 649 vehicles of all types. It can be assumed that by the beginning of the war these figures had increased slightly, since the total number of tractors and vehicles of 8 MK indicated in the documents exceeds the arithmetic sum of their presence in three divisions by about 70 units for tractors and 600 units for vehicles. In general, by the beginning of the war, the 8th MK was a powerful strike formation consisting of 32 thousand people, 925 tanks and armored vehicles, more than 3.5 thousand tracked tractors and wheeled vehicles **[79]**.

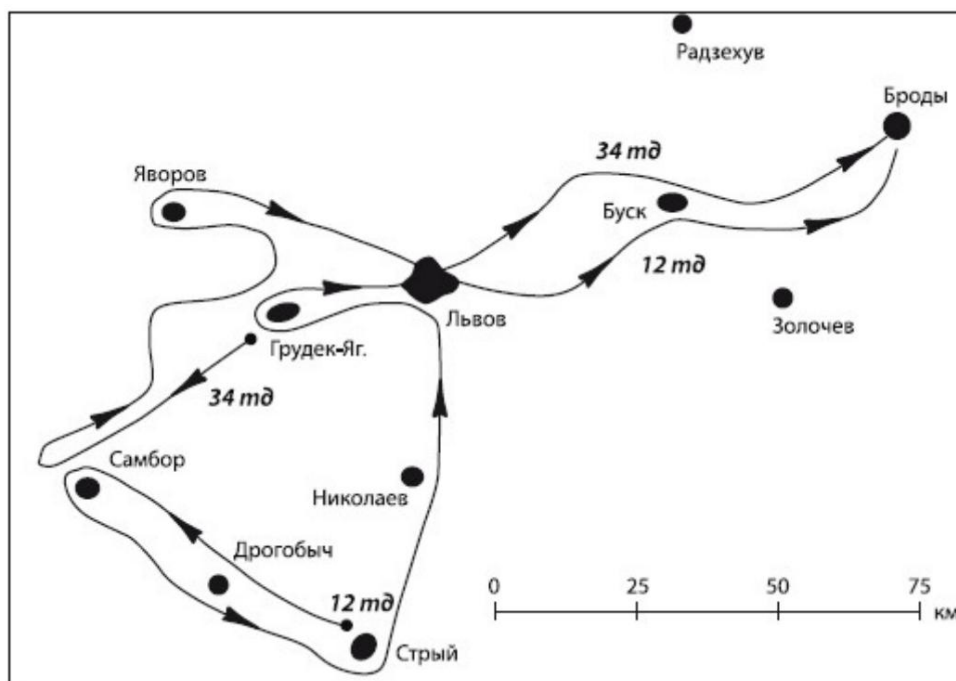
As in most such cases, the archives of the mechanized corps and its divisions nominally exist, but they are practically empty. The documents of the operational department of the headquarters of the corps (TsAMO. F. 3438. Inv. 1) begin in July 1941, by that time there was little left of the corps; in the archival fund of the 7th MD (TsAMO. F. 1057) there are several documents until June 22, and nothing more; in the fund of the 12th TD (TsAMO. F. 3012) there are no operational documents at all. However, the lack of primary documents is compensated to some extent by numerous reports and reports on the combat operations of the corps and its divisions, compiled in July-August 1941 and preserved in the archives of higher headquarters. There is also a completely unique document - the Combat Action Log of the 34th Panzer Division, compiled, as one might assume, with a minimum time delay in relation to the events described (the inscription on the wax seal reads: "stitched, sealed 2.7.41"), which **allows** enough authentically reconstruct the short and tragic history of this

connections.

On the eve of the war, the 8th mechanized corps was part of the 26th Army. This circumstance is directly confirmed by all known documents, however, the 34th Panzer Division met the dawn on June 22, being in Grudek Jagiellonsk, i.e., in the zone of the neighboring 6th Army, near the highway Lvov, Przemyśl. How and why she got there - no explanation has yet been found for this. The 12th tank division was stationed in the city of Stryi, the 7th motorized division was stationed in Drohobych. Judging by the July report of the commander of the 8th MK, parts of the corps were raised on combat alert at 5.40 on June 22. **[209]** True, the Combat Log of the 12th TD indicates a different time - 2 am on June 22. **[210]** The commanders opened the "red packets" with the order of the Military Council of the 26th Army of May 17, 1941, according to which

formations of the 8th mechanized corps were to be concentrated northwest of the city of Sambir. (Fig.

18.) The corps was obviously advancing to the "point" of the border ledge, from which, according to pre-war plans, it was to advance to the west. However, as the deputy commander of the 8th MK, brigadier commissar (later general) N. Popel, writes in his post-war memoirs, **"the enemy, who started the war with an unexpected blow, dictated his will to us, broke our plans ."** [211] The command of the SWF did not dare to launch an offensive - neither to the west towards Krakow, nor to the north towards Lublin. On the evening of June 22, at 20-40 (at that time not all parts of the mechanized corps had time to reach Sambir), the commander of the 8th MK received an order from the commander of the South-Western Front - by forced night march by the morning of June 23, go to the area of Vinniki, Kurovitsa (east of Lvov) and be **"in readiness for a counterattack by motorized units of the enemy found in the Sokal region."** [212] Probably, in order not to create an impassable traffic jam on the Sambir-Lvov highway, tank divisions (hundreds of tanks, thousands of vehicles, tractors and motorcycles) moved back in different ways, in particular, the 12th TD received an order to return "as it came", i.e. through Stryi, Nikolaev to Lvov and Kurovitsa.



Rice. 18. Advance routes for tank divisions of the 8th mechanized corps

There was one, but extremely reckless mistake in the order of the front - the mechanized corps was transferred to the operational subordination of the 6th Army. Commander Muzychenko, of course, immediately got down to business. As he claims in his

In the report of the commander of the 8th MK Ryabyshev, on the morning of June 23, **"an oral order was received from the commander of the 6th Army to turn the corps and concentrate it in the Yavorov, Grudek-Jagellonsky area."** [209] It is strange, but Ryabyshev began to carry out the "verbal order", contrary to the written order of the front command, and many kilometers of rumbling columns of tanks crawled to the west. Strictly speaking, everyone crawled in different directions, because the troops did not have time to respond to the changing commands of the commanders, and no one had time to reach Kurovice at all (the 12th TD

received an order while in the area of m. Nikolaev). The commander of the 6th Army was not allowed to govern for a long time, and already at 15-20 (at least such a time is indicated on the document) he signs an order of the opposite content: "To the commander of the 8th mechanized corps . **Stop the units and turn along the Krasne route** (settlement 6 km south of Busk. - **M.S.), Brody ... Get in touch with the commander of the 15th mechanized corps and jointly destroy the enemy tank group in the direction of Dubno.** [213] It is strange, but the mechanized corps began to carry out the order signed at 15:20 only at 06:00 on June 24 (as Ryabyshev writes in his report), or at 03:30, as recorded in the ZhBD of the 34th Panzer Division. [214] Be that as it may, but by noon on June 24, the 8th mechanized corps was a group of people, tanks and vehicles randomly scattered over tens of kilometers; something else was moving stubbornly, something had already stopped, because the drivers had not slept for the third day.

On the narrow streets of Lvov, units of the 8th mechanized corps, leaving for Busk, Brody, met head-on with combat vehicles of the 32nd TD of the 4th mechanized corps, returning after a failed battle near Kamenka Bugskaya to the Yavorov highway. All this madness ended only by the evening of June 25, when the 8th mechanized corps, with the heads of columns of tank divisions, went to Brody. Although the distance from Stryi to Brody does not exceed 140 km in a straight line, the tanks of the 8th mechanized corps wound about 350–400 km on their tracks [80]. For the mechanized formations of that time, going 400 km in 5 days is an excellent result. The only question that remains controversial is its price.

In one of his articles, written dozens of years after the war, General Ryabyshev dropped the phrase: **"During a march of almost 500 km, the corps lost up to half of obsolete tanks from enemy air strikes and for technical reasons."** This is a good, "correct", "necessary" phrase, and it was destined for a long life. When rewriting and quoting, the phrase was improved many times over. First, the words **"obsolete designs"** were discarded as unnecessary ; it turned out that 8 MK lost half of all tanks on the march. Then they forgot about the hull number and, more importantly, about the completely

a march, unique in length, made by him before going into battle; now "the mechanized corps (plural) of the South-Western Front in the first days of the war lost half of the tanks on the march." In this form, the phrase suited everyone, because it gave the desired "objective explanation" of the reasons for the disappearance of the many thousands of tank hordes - everything broke down, not tanks, but

"coffins", hopelessly outdated trash ... Completely different numbers are found in the documents. The combat log of the 34th TD contains two references to equipment lagging behind on the march: **"June 24. By the time the division made its appearance, 45 wheeled vehicles, 29 T-26s, 17 T-35s, and 6 BTs had lagged behind from the Yavorov, Grudek-Yagelonsky forest area. Until 18.00 in the area of Busk, Krasne, Kozluc, vehicles were refueled and the stragglers were pulled up. At 18.00, the division continued to move ... June 26. 10 T-35s, 15 T-26s, 18 wheeled vehicles fell behind."** [214] Temporarily lagged behind on the march and "irretrievably lost" are completely different concepts, but

even forgetting about this, we see "losses" figures of one sixth, and not at all half of the total number of tanks. As for the "stragglers forever", the "Report on the combat operations of the 34th Panzer Division" signed on August 2, 1941, gives some idea (hardly after what happened to this division, a thorough account could be preserved) of their number: **"7 BT, 3 T-26, 2 BA-10 and 3 BA-20 lagged behind."** [215] A total of 10 light tanks. Less than 4% of the original amount. True, this number did not include 50-ton T-35s. These monsters were not created for forced marches, and an attempt to drive them like motorcycles gave the expected result: **"T-35 consisting of 38 pieces. during the movement from Grudek-Yagelonsky to the west to Przemyśl and from there to the northeast to Dubno, they basically fell behind, and up to 10 tanks fell behind due to failure on bridges, and the rest did not"**

The combat log of the 12th TD (judging by the intonation and content, compiled retroactively) in the entry dated June 24 contains the following phrase: "Due to the non-stop **movement, the lagging vehicles could not catch up with their columns, and their number kept growing, during the indicated period the division lost due to accidents and bombing: KV tanks - 2 units, KhT-133** (flamethrower version of the T-26 tank) - **2 units, BT-7 - 1, T-34 - 3, trucks up to 20 units.** Total - 8 tanks. The figure is within the error of determining the initial number of tanks in the division. At the end of the railroad, in the "Conclusions" section, the compiler again returns to the topic of march losses: **"During the first day of the war, up to 12 KV failed, having no spare parts and operating without inspections."** [210]

Why 2 turned into 12 and how this is connected with the fact that the “conclusions” were written in August, when it was necessary to explain the huge losses of the division, is an open question. In any case, **there is nothing even remotely similar to the "loss of half of all tanks" in real documents.**

Combat order No. 0015 of the command of the South-Western Front set the task of delivering a strike from the Brody area with the forces of three (4th, 8th and 15th) mechanized corps, defeating the enemy's motorized grouping that had broken through the front and reaching the Voinitsa, Milyatin, Sokal area. [216] Translated into the language of geography, this means an offensive in a northwestern direction to a depth of 80–90 km. The offensive was ordered to begin **"exactly at 7.00 on June 25"**, but, since the 4th mechanized corps, the commander of the 6th Army, Muzychenko, "wandered to himself", the 15th mechanized corps continued to rush through the forest, without leaving the forest, and the 8th th mechanized corps on the morning of June 25 was on the march from Busk to Brody, then there was no one to carry out the order.

Late in the evening (at 22-30) on June 25, order No. 0016 was signed at the front headquarters; the task was left the same, the enemy grouping was still called "Radekhovsky" (although the German 11th TD had already occupied Dubno by that time and was preparing to attack Ostrog, Shepetovka), the start of the attack was postponed to 9 am June 26. From the 4th mechanized corps, only the 8th tank division was to take part in the counterattack. [217] At that time, this division was fighting with the German infantry in the area of Yavorov, Magerov and the advance to Brody had not even begun. The 15th mechanized corps stubbornly refused to leave the forest. Thus, the crushing blow of three mechanized corps turned into an offensive by one 8th mechanized corps.

There are three divisions in the mechanized corps. Two took part in the offensive (12th and 34th tank). What did the twice Red Banner Order of the Red Banner of Labor 7th Motorized Division named after M.V. do on June 26? Frunze is hard to understand. In the report of the commander of the 8th MK, the following is written verbatim: ***"The 7th motorized rifle division at 13 o'clock attacked the enemy in the Bordulyaki, Stanislavchik, Monastyrek sector, but did not have much success in this battle and remained at the occupied line until dark."*** [209] Bordulyaki, Stanislavchik, Monastyrek are settlements. near the Styr River, on the western bank of which the 37th Panzer Division of the 15th MK was rushing about. Who attacked whom? Just in case, I recommend the reader to re-read and recalculate the number of radio stations in the tank formations of the South-Western Front, however, for communication through the river. Styr in its upper reaches, it was possible to call to each other with a voice or launch paper "pigeons" with notes ...

The main thing in this mysterious story is that in the presence of two (7th and 212th) motorized rifle divisions in the region of Brody (and this is a total of 4 regiments, 12 infantry battalions), tank divisions of the 8th MK began to force the swampy floodplain of the Slonovka and Sytenka without proper infantry support (see incl. fig. 7). In the "Conclusions" section of the ZhBD of the 12th TD, it is quite self-critical: ***"The use of tanks in the battle near Leshnev, Korsuv, vys. 241, 0***

I consider it fundamentally wrong, because there was a river in front of the division, which should be taken by the infantry, and then the tanks could be transported. Second. From the beginning of the use of tanks, one battalion was planted (there were three such battalions in the division's own motorized rifle regiment. - ***M.S.) of infantry on tanks, which fell when standing by the river for a long time due to the impossibility of crossing under the fire of mortars and artillery; the tanks were so densely packed that some of them clung to their tracks. Finally, the enemy was so small that the use of the entire division was not necessary. [210]***

It is not often possible to find such words in military documents (***"the enemy was so small"***), but in this case they are twice true. Firstly, the crossings at Leshnev were covered by one reinforced infantry battalion of the Wehrmacht, a tank division to defeat it is really too much. Secondly, in a wooded and swampy area, where it is difficult (or completely impossible) to deploy a mass of tanks in battle formation on narrow country roads, it is pointless to drive them into such a heap "that some of them clung to their tracks ". And thirdly, and most importantly, no "division" was used against the German infantry battalion; in fact, a group of tanks of the 12th TD, numbering less than two battalions, participated in the battle on June 26: ***"June 26. In the morning, the offensive of the 12th TD began on the enemy, who was defending at the turn of the river. Elephant; by this time, both regiments had no more than 75 tanks*** (??? see the above figures for

losses on the march. - ***M.S.) , but even this number could not be fully used due to the swampy terrain. The fighting for the capture of Leshnev, Korsuv, height 241.0 began quite successfully, and by 14.00 six tanks reached the ridge of height 241*** (4.5 km north of Leshnev, this hill is 30-40 m higher than the surrounding area. - ***M.S.) , crossed the river and approached Cape Leshnev, which was set on fire by our artillery ... In the area of the offensive of the division, the enemy's 92nd Infantry Regiment operated, reinforced by one anti-tank division, a battery of heavy mortars and an artillery battery. During the battle, our units lost: KV tanks - 5 units, T-34 - 18 units, BT-7 - and the infantry 10 units. [210]*** Immediately

we note that in the report of the corps commander, three times (!) Lower numbers of tank losses were named: ***"In this battle, the 12th TD suffered heavy losses in personnel and materiel: 8 tanks were hit in battle, 2 tanks were loaded*** (as in the text. - *M.S.*) ***in a swamp.*** [209] The 34th Panzer

Division, having concentrated in the area west of Srebno, attacked across the river. Sytenka to the north was supposed to cover the right flank of the main shock group of the corps. In the ZhBD division, the events of June 26 are described extremely briefly and sparingly: ***"While fighting***

in the forests north of the river. Sytenka, the tank regiments did not have any progress due to strong artillery fire. As a result of the fighting, there are losses: over 31 T-26s, 5 BTs, 3

armored vehicles. Trophies - the headquarters of the 137th airborne detachment [82] was destroyed, up to 30 prisoners were captured, including 3 officers, 17 wheeled vehicles, up to 150 bicycles, 35 motorcycles, 2 tankettes were destroyed, and 4 tanks, 2 anti-tank guns were destroyed in the Krupets area

Frolov, acting with a company of Hero of the Soviet Union in the Srebno area, went missing. [214] In the

August report on the combat operations of the 34th Panzer Division a very critical assessment of the concept of the operation was given:

"It also raises doubts about the use of the 34th TD, when there was an order from the commander of the 8th MK to act in the forest north of Radziwillow in the presence of water barriers (the Slonuvka and Sytenka rivers), as well as wetlands, which hampered the maneuvering actions of the division, and the division, having met a strong artillery and mortar unit of the enemy, lost over 30 tanks. The proposal of the commander of the 34th TD, Colonel Vasiliev, was not to climb into forests and water barriers, but to act in the direction of Brody to destroy enemy tanks moving from Brody to Radziwiŏw" [83].

[215] And yet, even a similarly organized and carried out blow shook the defense of the 48th tank corps of the Wehrmacht to the ground: ***"June 26. 09.00. A report***

was received from 57 infantry divisions that a long-awaited counterattack by enemy tank forces had begun to the south of Leshnev. Most of the forces of the 57th Infantry Division are located in the Lopatin area (i.e., they are guarding the possible actions of the 15th mechanized corps. - M.S.), and they cannot be distracted to repel this counterattack ... The situation near Leshnev becomes critical. The reinforced 1st Battalion of the 179th Infantry Regiment offered stubborn resistance and suffered heavy losses. Despite the resistance of our troops, the Russians managed to break through with the help of strong artillery support and tanks across the river and bypass the village with

both flanks. Due to the incessant enemy fire, it was not possible to undermine the bridge located south of Leshnev. Separate tank units of the enemy broke through to the area of the Mytnitsa colony (settlement 5.5 km south of Berestechko. - M.S.) and reached the Styr River in the area west of Berestechko (strange, but not one of the identified Soviet documents speaks of such a deep advance. - M.S.).

Our infantry and artillery units in the area north of Leshnev began to retreat in places under pressure from the enemy. Only the disorganization of the Russian attack and the personal intervention of the commander of the 57th Infantry Division prevented a further deterioration of the situation. By order of the command of the corps, units of the reinforced 199th regiment, which was advancing to the Sitno area to carry out the task of securing the flanks, were turned [back to Leshnev] in order to push back the enemy that had broken through. 12.10. The situation, unfortunately,

forces us to use 16 TD to repel the attack of the enemy. The division was ordered to throw into battle all available forces in the sector where the enemy had broken through. The corps command is trying to bring up all available anti-tank units. On urgent requests from the ground troops, the Luftwaffe conducts constant raids on large concentrations of the enemy, seen on both sides of the road in the Brody, Leshnev area.

At 1400 hours, advanced units of the 16th TD are fighting in the Kremenets region, while the motorized infantry brigade [84] of the division, cut off from the rest of the forces in the Leshnev region during the enemy breakthrough, is still on the western bank

of the river. Styr. The situation in the area south of Berestechko remains critical even in the evening. The enemy, using tanks, is advancing from the forest area northeast of Leshnev, through Redkow to Ostrow (this is the offensive of the 34th TD. - M.S.) . In the evening, he manages to temporarily block the road in the Ostrow region (and this success is not reflected in the ZhBD 34th TD. - M.S.) . At 18.00, in view of the situation, the corps command ordered the preparation of bridges across the river. Styr for undermining (a record unique for June 41, indicating that the Wehrmacht command did not exclude the possibility of an operational-scale retreat. - M.S.) . After all the anti-tank units located on the southern outskirts of Berestechko were thrown into battle, the Russian tanks that broke through to Ostrow were driven back with heavy losses ... "[188]

For the first time since the beginning of the war for the German troops in the offensive zone of the GA "South" there was, without exaggeration, a critical situation. All the more remarkable is the reaction of the Wehrmacht commanders to this situation:

“20.30. Since Russian tanks approached 6 km to the command post of the corps, and also due to constant enemy air raids that made orderly work impossible, control was transferred to a spare command post located in the estate 2 km northwest of Berestechko (highlighted by me . - M.S.).

Assessment of the situation: There are no factors requiring a deviation from the original plan so far (Russian tanks 8 km from the corps headquarters are no reason to change offensive plans) . ***Radiograms were sent to the headquarters of the divisions with instructions for June 27th. A general order for the corps will not be issued. 57th Front should recapture a section of the river near Leshnev. If the enemy tries to counterattack, take all measures to repel these counterattacks. The tasks for the 11th TD are the same as on June 26 - an offensive through Ostrog in the direction of Shepetovka*** (i.e., 100–130 km east of Berestechko. - M.S.) ... ***Combat***

experience: Despite the

fact that the Russians hit a very vulnerable spot on the flank of the corps, they could not use the fruits of their successful attack near Leshnev. In the depths of the breakthrough zone, there is no systematic control of the battle on their part. The enemy pulverizes his shock fist in scattered attacks, unrelated either in time or in place, by small groups of tanks (or even single vehicles), which are almost never accompanied by infantry. It was because of this dispersal of forces that our relatively small anti-tank weapons managed to push back the enemy's tank units and destroy many Russian tanks in the process ... ”[188] Making this entry in the Journal of Combat Operations, the Germans did not yet know how

lucky they were - the command of 12- The 1st Panzer Division (the main strike force of the 8th MK) assessed the constant enemy air raids, and the active resistance of the enemy as a whole, as "a factor requiring a radical change in the original plan." In ZhBD 12th TD it is

described like this:

“From 14.00 to 20.00 more than 20 bomber raids were carried out on parts of the division and its rear. In the absence of our aviation, enemy aircraft flew very low. The rear of the regiments and divisions suffered great damage, burned with ammunition, fuel and other equipment (omission in the text) ***of vehicles ... The unbearable actions of enemy aviation forced the commander of the 12th TD to decide to withdraw the division from the battle. By 24.00, the division was withdrawn from the battle and by the morning of 27.6 concentrated*** [near the city] ***Podkamin. [210]***

Concentrated in Podkamin - this is a retreat to the south from Leshnev for 40 km! Solid march. In a document prepared later in the GABTU of the Red Army entitled "Mistakes made in action 8 MK", this exit from the battle is described as follows: "***In the forests in the Boldura region*** (settlement 6 km south of Leshnev. - *M.S.*) ***26.6 tank units of the 12th TD were heavily bombarded by enemy aircraft and began to spontaneously withdraw in the direction of Brody, Podkamen. On the road, the tanks were met by employees of the headquarters of the 8th MK and groups went to the Brody area*** (that is, they caught and turned them already beyond Brody. - *M.S.*). ***As a result, by the end of the day on June 26, the commander of the 12th Panzer Division withdrew to Podkamen with 30 tanks. The headquarters of the division lost control of the regiments, and, obviously, control was***

Operational report No. 09 of the headquarters of the South ***-Western Front at 20-00 on June 26*** summed up the results of the first day of the counteroffensive as follows: ***and from the side of the neighbor on the left (15th mechanized corps), stopped by the enemy in the initial area for the attack. The 15th mechanized corps, acting in the same indecisive manner, did not comply with the order to attack ... "*** [218]

The second day of the offensive (June 27) is described in the ZhBD of the 12th Panzer Division with unparalleled laconicism and truly epic calmness: ***"Combat missions were not set for the 12th TD. Parts of the division in the Podkamen area put themselves in order, pull up the lagging material part, replenish what was spent during 26.6.41.*** Dot. Translated from Russian into Russian: "I drank in the morning - the whole day is a day off." The command of the division so quickly and so far rolled away from the combat zone that for a whole day they allegedly could not contact the headquarters of the 8th mechanized corps and find out about the events taking place there and the orders given. These

events have been discussed on the pages of historical and memoir literature for many decades. They are known to the reading public mainly from the memoirs (very vividly written by the unknown "literary black man") of N. Popel, at that time the deputy commander of the 8th MK. In Popel's version, it was like this: at dawn on June 27, the corps headquarters received an order to withdraw the mechanized corps beyond the Zolochiv, Podkamen, Pochaev line; a few hours later, an order was received with the exact opposite content - to advance on Dubno; a couple of hours later, the deputy commander of the South-Western Front, corps commissar (this is such a title) Vashugin, personally arrived at the location of the 8th mechanized corps and, without hesitation in

expressions and threats, demanded to launch an offensive immediately.

[211] N.S. Khrushchev, in his world-famous memoirs, recalling the last conversation with Vashugin, cites Vashugin as saying that he allegedly gave the commanders of the mechanized corps some oral orders that contradicted the orders of the Military Council of the

front. **[219]** What really happened there? Only one thing can be said with complete certainty - this story is very muddy. Let's start with the fact that even in kindergarten, orders to write off semolina and enlist a cleaner to work are made in writing, however, if the "stop order" of the front command was given, then verbally and through a messenger. At least, this is how it is described in the report of the commander of the 8th mechanized corps, which was repeatedly mentioned above: **"At 2.30 on 27.6.41, Major General Panyukhov arrived at the commander of the 8th mechanized corps and gave him the following oral order from the commander of the Southwestern**

Front ... " **[209]** The August report of the command of the 15th MK contains a completely enchanting phrase: **"June 27. On the basis of the order of the South-Western Front No. 0019 dated 28.6.41, by the morning of 29.6.41, it was ordered to withdraw to the line of the Zolochovsky heights ... "** **[198]** On June 27, the order from June 28 comes to the corps?

The number of the mysterious order is 0019, but at the same time there are (in quite written form) order 0017 of June 27 and order 018 of June 28, the latter setting the task of "using the success of the 8th mechanized corps", and the 8th MK itself was ordered to advance east of the river . Ikva, from Dubno to Ostrog; in other words, order No. 018 could appear only after the cancellation of the

"stop order", after the order to advance on Dubno, and even after the report on the success of this offensive. Finally, to complete the picture of complete chaos, the compilers of the SBD-36 collection, after mentioning "Order No. 0019", gave a footnote: **" Not published in this collection, because it cannot be read."** How is that?

History released 4.5 thousand tanks to the Southwestern Front, but there was no serviceable typewriter at the front headquarters? With the numbering of orders of the command of the SWF, in general, a complete "trouble". On June 28, order No. 018 is issued, and on June 29 order No. 0025 appears. Of course, several orders could be issued within a day and a half, but not seven! Ryabyshev's report contains a completely awkward number: **"At 6.00 on 27.6.41, in the area 2 km south of Brody, through Brigadier Commissar Mikhailov, the second order of the commander of the Southwestern Front No. 2121 of 27.6.41 was received on the offensive of the 8 corps** from 9.00 27.6.41 in the direction of Brody, m. Verba, Dubno ... " **[209]** "private combat or

numbering that does not coincide with the numbering of the general orders of the commander), it is not clear how a document with such a serial number could appear on the

sixth day of the war? Without occupying the reader's attention with further elucidation of the details of this dark history, we note two essential and indisputable conclusions. First: at the headquarters of the Southwestern Front there was neither unity of will, nor firmness in making decisions and putting them into practice. Second: the real actions (and inaction) of the divisions of the 8th mechanized corps, all this morning leapfrog with orders had no noticeable effect. The 12th TD rolled back (we use such a streamlined term) to Podkamen **even before the "stop order" appeared** (if only this order existed in reality) and most of its forces sat in Podkamen all day on June 27, no longer paying attention to what or orders from the front and the corps. As for the

34th TD, it did not "roll back" anywhere, and from morning until the evening of June 27, it continued to fight north of the river. Sytenka, in the strip Khotyn, Kozin. Such a conclusion is based not only on the ZhBD of the 34th TD, it is directly confirmed by the documents of the enemy (ZhBD of the 48th tank corps

of the Wehrmacht): ***"June 27 ... Starting in the early morning, the enemy crosses the river north of the bridgehead and again attacks our units with large forces ... Russian attempts to break through in this sector, as expected by the corps command, are in full***

swing ... 14.30. The advance of the motorized infantry brigade [16th TD] is constantly interrupted by enemy tanks operating from the forests south of the [Ostrow-Kozin] road . The brigade has been in battle near Khotyn since no

19.00. The motorized infantry brigade still failed to establish contact with the forward units of the 16th division. The brigade is fighting with large enemy forces in the Gonoratka area (settlement 5 km east of Khotyn. - M.S.) , while many enemy tanks were destroyed ... " [188]

So, in the morning of June 27, the location of German troops in the "triangle" Berestechko, Dubno, Kremenets was as follows: the 11th Panzer Division went far to the east and already occupied Ostrog (50 km east of Dubno), the 16th Panzer Division was torn apart into two parts - the tank regiment left along the road to Kremenets, where it was stopped at the turn of the river. Ikva with formations of the 2nd echelon of the South-Western Front, and the motorized infantry brigade of the division was connected by battle with units of the 34th Panzer Division of Colonel Vasilyev in the Khotyn area; 57th Infantry Division

defense with the front to the south in the Leshnev, Korsuv zone; from the northwest, the 111th and 75th infantry divisions

approached the line of the Styr River. In Dubno itself, the Germans left minimal forces: the rear units of the 11th TD, the communications battalion, the artillery department and some other corps units of the 48th TK; also on the main highway Brody, Verba, Dubno, there was nothing but a few German barriers. Accordingly, if Commissar Vashugin really stamped his feet, threatened to be shot and drove forward, then in fact he was absolutely right - the moment for capturing Dubno, the most important road junction of Western Ukraine, was exceptionally favorable and it was impossible to miss it.

Alas, despite the theoretical presence of a mass of mechanized troops, there was no one to seize the moment in a timely manner. The 12th Panzer Division stubbornly "put itself in order", the 7th Motorized Division very slowly retreated from the turn of the river. Styr to Brody, the 34th Panzer was connected by battle in the area between the Sytenka and Plyashchevka rivers. Only at 2:30 p.m. (such a time is indicated in the Operations Report of the 34th TD), the advanced units of the tank regiments of the 34th TD began to reach the Brody-Dubno highway through Sitno and by 4 pm. the head of the columns, the division was already approaching Verba. [215] To reinforce the 34th division, a group of 30 KV and T-34 tanks from the 12th TD [85] was sent, which "rolled back" much more slowly than others and were returned to Brody on the orders of the commander of the mechanized corps; this group, by the end of the day on June 27, connected

with Vasiliev's division. [209] The end result of the eventful day on June 27 was as follows: ***"On the way to the Smolyarnya-Verba sector, the division destroys up to 40 motorcyclists, 4 light tanks, captures 20 vehicles in the Verba region and, at the beginning of darkness, goes to Podluzhia*** (32 km along the highway from Sitno, 6 km to the southern outskirts of Dubno. - *M.S.*). ***The 67th tank regiment slips into the southern outskirts of Dubno, where it is subjected to heavy anti-tank and artillery fire from the southern outskirts of Dubno and from Zabramya*** (a western suburb of Dubno. - *M.S.*). ***The division is caught in darkness, parts of the division are being pulled up to Podluzhia***

The fact that the advanced units of the 34th TD went out to the suburbs of Dubno is also fully confirmed by the entries in the ZhBD 48 of the Wehrmacht TC: ***"In the evening, numerous motorized and tank formations of the enemy, forming a long column, broke through from the direction of Brody to the northeast, passing between the advanced units and the rifle brigade 16 etc. ... The attack of enemy tank units near Tarakanov*** (southern suburb of Dubno. - *M.S.*) ***in the general direction of Dubno caused more serious***

loss than previously expected. Near the southwestern outskirts of Dubno, another enemy tank attack was repulsed ... "

Before the capture of the city remained, it would seem, quite a bit. It can be assumed that reports about this were received by the headquarters of the South-Western Front. For this, or for some other reason, but at 4 o'clock in the morning on June 28, Combat Order No. 018 appeared, signed by four members of the Front's Military Council (Kirponos, Purkaev, Vashugin, Khrushchev). The document is quite lengthy, it has 412 words, but they all come down to one thing: "Give it!" The order not only set the most decisive tasks, but also for the first time rigidly indicated where, by the end of the day on June 28, the headquarters of the corps participating in the operation should be.

The general plan was to use an offensive from three sides (from the east, south and west) to crush and crush the enemy's mechanized grouping. 36th Rifle Corps (three rifle divisions) from the Trostyanets line, r. Ikva was supposed to reach the line Mlynov, Kozin (advance depth 15-20 km), the corps headquarters - in Dubno. The 14th cavalry division, together with the corps of the 5th cavalry corps, was supposed to, advancing from the line of Kremenets, r. Ikva, defeat the tank regiment of the German 16th TD and by the end of the day reach Khotyn, Kozin (advance depth 25 km). The most stunning task was assigned to two rifle divisions of the 37th rifle corps - advancing from the Zolochiv, Podkamen, Pochaev line, they had to reach the line of the Styr and Radostavka rivers (advance depth 34-40 km).

Against this background, the tasks assigned to the mechanized corps look quite modest. The 15th mechanized corps was supposed to finally occupy Berestechko **"and assist the 8th mechanized corps in defeating those who had broken through the river. Ikva of enemy groups.** The 8th mechanized corps was supposed to catch up and defeat **the "motorized units of the enemy operating east of the river. Ikva in the direction of Ostrug "** (i.e., the German 11th TD). **Having destroyed the enemy, by the end of the day, concentrate Zdolbuniv, Mizoch, Ozhenin** (settlement 20-30 km east of Dubno. - **M.S.) ". [220]** And all this in one day.

June 28

We will never know for sure - what they thought, what they counted on (what they hoped for without any reasonable calculation) the three generals and Khrushchev, who signed Order No. ask for two cars"), and they decided that in order to advance the troops 3 km

forward, it is necessary to order to advance to the other end of the globe ... But it is known exactly how it all ended. Moreover, it is known from reports and operational reports, signed by the same generals:

“Report on the situation on the Southwestern Front by 22.00 on 28.6.41 ... the 36th and 37th rifle corps, the 15th mechanized corps and the 14th cavalry division went [on the offensive] from the front (claim.) Dubno , Kremenets, Zolochiv to the northwest. The offensive is developing extremely slowly and has not yet yielded significant results on June 28, 1941 The 36th Rifle Corps goes on the defensive along the eastern bank of the river. Ikva at the front of Zbytyn, Sudovich, (suit.) Kremenets. The 5th Cavalry Corps (14th Cavalry Division with the 512th Rifle Regiment of the 36th Rifle Corps) goes on the defensive at the Kremenets-Dunayuv line (that is, everyone remained in the starting area for the offensive planned by order No. 018. - M.S.) . The 37th Rifle Corps advances in the direction of Stanislavchik, its 139th Rifle Division at 23.00 on 28.6.41 [went to] Busk (i.e., made a march, but has not yet reached the line of contact with the enemy. - M.S.)...” [222]

“Combat Order No. 0025. Headquarters of the Southwestern Front. 29.6.41 ... 6th Army as part of the 36th Rifle Corps (140th and 146th Rifle Divisions), 37th Rifle Corps (141st, 139th and 80th Rifle Divisions), 6- 1st Rifle Corps, 5th Cavalry Corps (3rd and 14th Cavalry Divisions) to firmly gain a foothold at the line (claim.) Dubno, Kremenets, Zolochiv, Bobrka. The 37th Rifle Corps with the onset of darkness on June 29, 1941 was withdrawn to the line of Nv. Pochayuv, Yasenov (that is, everything ended with a withdrawal to the initial line for the failed offensive. - M.S.) ”. [223] On the

same day, June 29, the Military Council of the front issued a directive (b / n), in which it assessed the actions of some formations that took part in the battles near Dubno, Kremenets:

“... No one organizes communication with a neighbor. The 14th cavalry and 141st rifle divisions (37 SC) were 12 km apart, did not know about each other's location ... The radio is used poorly. There was no radio communication between 36 SCs, 8 MKs and 19 MKs due to the absence (lack of what? walkie-talkies? radio operators? batteries? chargers?) waves and call signs (that is, elementary organizational efforts of the corresponding headquarters. - M.S.) ... There were cases of panic in the troops (the 140th and 146th rifle divisions of the 36th SC), when, even without seeing the enemy or with his slight appearance, the units fled to the rear, lea

the commanders of subunits and units did not take proper measures to establish order ...

” [224] On June 28, after many days of preparation, preparation and concentration, the 15th mechanized corps finally went on the offensive. Nominally, three tank divisions (8th, 10th and 37th) took part in the crushing blow, which a week ago had more than 950 serviceable tanks in their arsenal, including 114 KV and 212 T-34. By the morning of June 28, about 530 tanks had disappeared to no one knows where. Evaporated in the hot June sun. There were also combat losses - about 100 tanks had been lost by that time by the 8th and 10th tank divisions (it is not necessary to talk about any exact numbers with such "order in tank units"). In any case, there were still more than three hundred tanks left (mainly in the 37th TD). By German standards, this would be enough to equip two tank divisions.

There were few infantry (not in absolute terms, but in proportion to such a number of tanks) - two motorized rifle regiments of the 10th and 37th tank divisions (the motorized rifle regiment of the 8th TD remained in the western suburbs of Lvov). True, there was also a whole 212th motorized rifle division that had never participated in battles, but it continued to stubbornly “defend” (without coming into contact with the enemy) the area of Brody, Radziwillow (i.e., was in the zone of the neighboring 8th mechanized corps).

During the time spent by the 15th MK on aimless throwing through the forest, the enemy managed to significantly strengthen his defense - parts of the 57th infantry division replaced two infantry divisions that approached the border (297th infantry division at Radzekhuv and 9th infantry division at Lopatin). There is no doubt that the defensive line along the swampy bank of the Ostrówka River was thoroughly prepared by the Germans, so that in this case the words ***"heavily fortified anti-tank area"*** are no longer without foundation. In general, taking into account the conditions of the wooded and swampy terrain, the task facing the 15 MK was not as simple as one might think, looking at the sheer number of Soviet tanks involved.

We note right away that in the ZhBD of the German 48th TK in the records of June 28 and 29 there is not even the slightest mention of hostilities in the area of the alleged offensive of the 15th mechanized corps. And this is somewhat strange, given that the tip of the counterattack was aimed at the location of the headquarters of the 48th TK, and only 25 km from Lopatin to Berestechko. Thus, in describing the events of June 28, we will have to use mainly the August reports of the command of the 15th MK and its divisions. However, upon careful reading, they are quite eloquent.

The first, at 11 o'clock on June 28, the 10th Panzer Division went on the offensive, consisting of the remnants of two tank regiments and for some reason only one

(out of three) rifle battalion of the 10th MSP. Where was everything else, including the pontoon-bridge units, it is better not to ask. The division (or rather, its pathetic shadow) poked into the swampy bank of the river. Ostrovka north of Lopatin, and that was it. True, the report of the mechanized corps gave a dramatic description of a fierce battle: **"Cross the**

gat ur. The will of Adamovsk, Severuvka, parts of the division could not, were surrounded (?) by the enemy ... The commander of the 15th mechanized corps, Colonel Ermolaev, seeing the whole situation and the impossibility of the units of the 10th TD to cross the river. Ostrovka along one road, which is under fire up to a battalion of heavy artillery and anti-tank guns of the enemy from the Lopatyn region and from the Okhladuv region (about 10 km from Okhladuv to the ill-fated gati, and what is most strange - it was in the Okhladuv region that the "consolidated group" was concentrated for the offensive 8 -th Panzer Division) , sent a communications delegate (with the initial presence of 12 radio stations in the 8th TD and 17 radio stations in the 10th TD) to the 8th Panzer Division to transmit a verbal order to the division to force the river. Ostrovka in the Guta Shklyan area to support the 10th Panzer Division from the west with

a strike on Lopatyn ... (there is a detailed story about the misfortunes of the communications delegate). ... **At 21 o'clock, enemy infantry with anti-tank guns leaked from the direction of Oplutsko and Kolesniki** (i.e., from the southwest) **into the forests of ur. The will of Adamovsk, where the firefight of tanks and infantry began. The night was coming. All attempts by the 10th Panzer Division to cross the river. Ostrówka were unsuccessful... The 10th Panzer Division remained in the area for the night, being under artillery crossfire** (a few pages earlier in the report it was said that by the beginning of the "offensive" in the 10th TD there were 10 howitzers of 122-mm and 12 howitzers of 152 mm caliber, i.e. twice as many as the enemy

From 11 am until late in the evening, during this fierce battle, the 10th Panzer Division suffered losses: **"KV tanks - 1 piece, BT - 7 pieces, T-34 - 1 piece** (total 9 tanks), **wounded - 6 people, killed - 1 person. The commander of the 10th artillery regiment went missing** (did this regiment fire at least one shot at the enemy?) **Major Bokovnev.** The enemy, who surrounded and defeated - well, if not a division, then two battalions (tank and rifle), also suffered losses: **"According to an eyewitness, an enemy battery and 15 motorcycles were destroyed."** [198]

The combat operations of the 8th Panzer Division are described verbatim as follows: **"The 8th Panzer Division, having received a verbal order through a communications delegate, fought with the enemy until 29.6.41 in the direc**

shelling and suffering heavy losses, she retreated from the Okhladov region into the forest southeast of Okhladov . A few words about this battle are also found in the "Report on the military operations of the 8th TD", here they are all to one: "The consolidated tank regiment fought in the Okhladuv, Toporuv area, being subordinate to the commander of the 15th MK. As a result of the fighting, 12 tanks were lost. The GAP fought, being in firing positions in the Holojow area (i.e.,

10 km from the tank regiment) , Wola Holoevska. [173] The only attempt to fulfill the offensive order is observed only in the actions of the 37th Panzer Division. Unfortunately, the attempt was clumsy, disorganized, and costly. In accordance with the decision of the commander, the division was to cross to the eastern bank of the river. Styr near Cape Monastyrrek, go along the country road to Bordulyaki and there cross over to the western shore (see incl., Fig. 6). There are no explanations for this plan in the report, but it can be assumed that in this way the commander decided to get rid of the need to build two crossings through the marshy mouths of the Radostavka and Ostruvka rivers. This whole plan crumbled along with the bridge near Bordulyaki blown up by the enemy. Then it was decided to cross the river. Styr near Stanislavchik, but there was already an enemy

there, up to an infantry battalion. "At 14.00 on 28.6.41, a motorized rifle regiment with the 3rd battalion of the 74th tank regiment launched an attack on the crossings near Stanislavchik. Deployed on the east bank of the river. Styr near the crossings, the head battalions of the 73rd Tank Regiment, with a slight delay, organized fire support for the motorized rifle regiment, which by this time had occupied the crossings, having suffered significant losses. Forcing the river Styr, 6-8 tanks of the 3rd battalion of the 74th tank regiment, acting together with a motorized rifle regiment to capture height 202.0 (about 1.5 km west of the crossing. - M.S.) , came under heavy

artillery fire enemy from ur. Las Denbnik and were hit. Having suffered significant losses and not having sufficient tank support (in the presence of more than 200 tanks, including 26 T-26 tanks armed with a three-inch gun. - M.S.) , the motorized rifle regiment was forced to suspend the offensive and go on the defensive in the western bank of the river Styr directly at the Stanislavchik crossings. In turn, the enemy, who covered by force up to a battalion the crossing on the western bank of the river. Styr, having suffered heavy losses, began a hasty retreat in the direction of height 202.0, ur. Las Denbnik. The 73rd Tank Regiment, which continued to fire on the retreating enemy, due to a temporary loss of control,

western bank of the river Steal in order to continue the attack on the shoulders of the retreating enemy ... " [200]

Now it was necessary to overcome the border of the ill-fated "river" (periodically in the report of the commander of the 37th TD it is called the "brook") Ostruvka. This task turned out to be unsolvable: ***"An attempt to cross the bridges across the river. Ostrovka north of height 202.0 was unsuccessful, since the lead 2-3 tanks that approached the bridge were instantly hit and caught fire. Several tanks tried to go around the bridge on the right and left, but this proved impossible; the tanks got stuck in a swamp and were hit by enemy artillery fire. It became quite obvious that without powerful artillery fire and infantry, the offensive would continue.***

it is forbidden..."

This became absolutely clear by the time the August report was written. On June 28, assessments of the situation were different. In one of the archival files of the ABTU SWF, a piece of paper was found signed by the chief of staff of the 37th TD, Lieutenant Colonel Semchuk: ***"To the commander of the 73rd TP. Monastery. 18.00 28.6.41. The division commander ordered immediately, under personal responsibility, to take the crossing and continue to carry out the task. [227]***

Reminders about "personal responsibility" did not help, the first combat losses and the death of commanders since the beginning of the war quickly and irreversibly demoralized the troops. ***"According to the chief of staff of the motorized rifle regiment, Captain Kartsev, the losses of the regiment are about 60% of the entire composition of the regiment. The regiment commander Major Shlykov and his deputy Major Schwartz were killed. The line occupied by the 37th MSP along the southern bank of the river. Styr (so in the text, but if you believe the report that the regiment nevertheless crossed to the western bank of the Styr River, then it should have been written "along the northern bank." - M.S.) in the Bordulyaki, Stanislavchik section, dotted dead and wounded. The 37th Motorized Rifle Regiment is severely demoralized." [228]*** In the late evening of June 28, the division withdrew

to the south bank of the river. Radostavka, i.e., returned to its original area. This ended the offensive operations of the 15th mechanized corps. Then there was a continuous withdrawal, which ended beyond the Dnieper.

The main events of the day on June 28 unfolded near the Brody, Dubno highway, in the offensive zone of the 8th mechanized corps. The corps at that time was divided into two parts: the advance group (34th Panzer Division and a combined detachment of 30 tanks of the 12th TD under the overall command of Commissar Popel), which broke through to the southern suburbs of Dubno, and the main forces as part of the 7th Motorized and the 12th Panzer Division, concentrated at

Brody. In the same place, near Brody and to the north (along the road to Leshnev), there was also the 212th motorized division of the 15th MK (theoretically brought under the direct control of the front command, but in fact not controlled by anyone). The task of the previous day for the 8th MK was to take Dubno (or, at least, join the main forces with the advanced group near Dubno), the task set by order of the South-Western Front No. 018 involved an offensive east of the river. Ikvy in the direction of Mizoch, Ostrog.

These plans remained forever on paper. Further than the village of Verba (on the highway Brody, Dubno) the 8th mechanized corps did not pass; strictly speaking, even only one battalion of the 7th MD reached Verba, and the main forces of the corps got stuck at the crossroads near Tarnovka (see incl., Fig. 7).

In ZhBD 48 TK of the Wehrmacht, this battle is said offensively little: ***“On June 28 ... Again, reports are coming in of a very long motorized column, accompanied by tanks, moving from Brody to Dubno ... A motorized infantry brigade [of the 16th Panzer Division] is fighting south of Kozin, and also in close proximity to it; The brigade managed to completely destroy several strong Russian infantry formations, and also knocked out many enemy tanks.*** And it's all. As for the tank regiment of the 16th TD, it was only late in the evening of June 28 that it received an order to stop the offensive on Kremenets, to turn around 180 degrees. and go to Verba; the defeat of the 8th mechanized corps took place without his participation. [188]

The fact that on the scale of the command of the German tank corps turned out to be just an insignificant episode was remembered for a long time by ordinary soldiers of the Wehrmacht. In the post-war "History of the combat path of the 16th Panzer Division" [86], the battle with Russian tanks is described with great drama:

“... The soldiers of the 8th company of the 64th motorized infantry regiment had a hard time in the battle with a heavy Russian tank. From constantly changing firing positions, he suppressed the infantry with fire and dragged out the capture of the village ... Tarnovka shook from the explosions of anti-tank grenades, the houses were on fire, all available weapons were aimed at destroying tanks. The wind carried smoke and fumes around. One heavy infantry gun (short-barreled 150-mm regimental gun. - M.S.) managed to knock out two medium tanks. The 50 mm anti-tank guns were useless at a distance of even 400 m. All the new steel colossi entered Tarnovka, but the soldiers of the 16th Panzer Division behaved with dignity. One 88-mm anti-aircraft gun destroyed 4 tanks within half an hour. When the attack was repulsed, the dead and wounded were picked up and the smoke cleared, 22 wrecked tanks could be counted on the battlefield ... ”

Mr. Isaev, quoting this fragment of "History 16 td", accompanies it with the following comment: **"This episode well characterizes the intensity of the battle that took place . "** [22] I fully agree with this assessment: the German soldiers who fought against the "steel colossi", having no anti-tank weapons adequate to the task, acted with great tension; one might even say - with courage and steadfastness. However, in my opinion, this episode primarily and mainly characterizes the scale of the "tank death" that occurred in MK 8 even before the battle. For decades, the Germans remembered the battle with one KV (**"heavy Russian tank"**), and they proudly recall that 22 Russian tanks were knocked out at the cost of heavy losses. And where were all the others?

By the beginning of the war, the 12th TD was armed with 335 serviceable (we emphasize this word with three lines) tanks, including 156 KV and T-34. During the march to the concentration area, either 8 or 18 tanks were lost. As for the stragglers on the march, from June 24 to June 28, all tanks could crawl twice from Lvov to Brody. In the battle near Leshnev on June 26, either 8 or 33 tanks were lost. Note that the minimum figures are not taken "from the ceiling", but from the most "archival documents". But even if we take into account only the maximum estimates, by June 28 the division had lost only 51 tanks, including 17 KV and 21 T-34s. Another 30 tanks went along with the 34th TD to Dubno; suppose that they were all "new types" (KV and T-34). Even with such a strict calculation method, it turns out that "steel colossi" in the amount of 254 tanks, including 88 invincible (**"50-mm anti-tank guns were useless at a distance of even 400 m"**) KV and T-34 should have entered Tarnovka . And another 83 BT tanks from the 7th MD, which to this day has not actually fought. Where is all this?

In the afternoon, units of the 75th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht approached the battlefield and cut the highway in the Sitno area, in the rear of the column of troops of the 8th mechanized corps. What follows is described in various documents with the same content, but with varying degrees of emotionality.

The combat log of the 12th TD: **"The commander of the 8th MK, having assessed the unfavorable situation, gave the order to withdraw from the battle. The departing column of staff and transport vehicles was covered on the right by the remnants of (???) tanks. When entering the battle, the tank of [division commander] Major General Mishanin was hit and caught fire. In this battle, the commander of the 12th TD, Major General Mishanin, and the head of communications, Major Krutiev, were killed. On the night of June 29, the division is withdrawn to the Podkamin area to put itself in order** (the division was engaged in this and there all day on June 27. - **M.S.**) . **As a result of the bat**

had losses: 6 KV, 15 T-34, 7 BT-7, 11 T-26, 15 BA-10, 3 BA-20; 37-mm guns - 8 pieces, 122-mm and 152-mm howitzers - 8 pieces, trucks more than 190 pieces. The indicated materiel was destroyed by anti-tank fire or aviation, burned down or was rendered unusable by the crews . [210] Report of Lieutenant General Ryabyshev "Fighting of the 8th mechanized corps

from 22 to 30.6.41": "The commander of the 12th TD, Major General Mishanin, was killed on the battlefield, the chief of staff, Colonel Popov, was crushed in a tank (so in the text. - M.S.), pom. the technical commander was killed. The head of communications of the division was killed. The commanders of the 23rd and 24th tank regiments were surrounded [near Dubno] along with units of the 34th tank division. A significant part of the commanding staff of the division headquarters, having been bombed, was partly killed, partly wounded; many commanders and Red Army soldiers fled in panic from the battlefield, led by the former deputy division commander, regimental commissar Volkov, believing that everything was broken and lost. Having lost a large number of tanks, artillery and vehicles, the remnants of the 12th Panzer Division by 24.00 28.6, without any control system, left the encirclement in parts and concentrated southeast of Brody. Since that time, the 7th MD and the remnants of the 12th TD ceased to exist as combat organisms ... " [229]

Memoirs of N.K. Popelya: **"At that moment, Mishanin's tank caught fire. The general slowly got out of the burning car. Without saying a word, alone, with a pistol, went to raise the lying infantry. A queue rang out, and Mishanin also silently sank to the ground ... Ryabyshev did not leave the neck [of the encirclement] , he waited for the regiments of the 7th MD to close the movement bypass it. Only late at night, when the last platoon passed the "gate", Ryabyshev got on the "emka" and rushed to Brody. On the way, he stumbled upon fighters wandering in crowds, burning cars, wounded lying in cuvettes. Frontier intended for Nesterov's division [12th TD],**

nobody occupied.

Some restless Red Army soldiers said that the motorized infantry rolled south, apparently to Ternopil. The commander turned onto the southern highway and about twenty kilometers overtook the tail of the stretched column. Nobody knew anything. Nesterov and Vilkov (under this name in the memoirs the political officer Volkov is presented. - M.S.) were not seen. Ryabyshev tried to stop the cars. From the cockpit of a lorry, a sleepy voice calmly said: " What other commander is there?" Our general is a traitor. Leaked to the fascists. Dmitry Ivanovich jerked the cockpit handle,

grabbed the speaker

belt, dragged out.

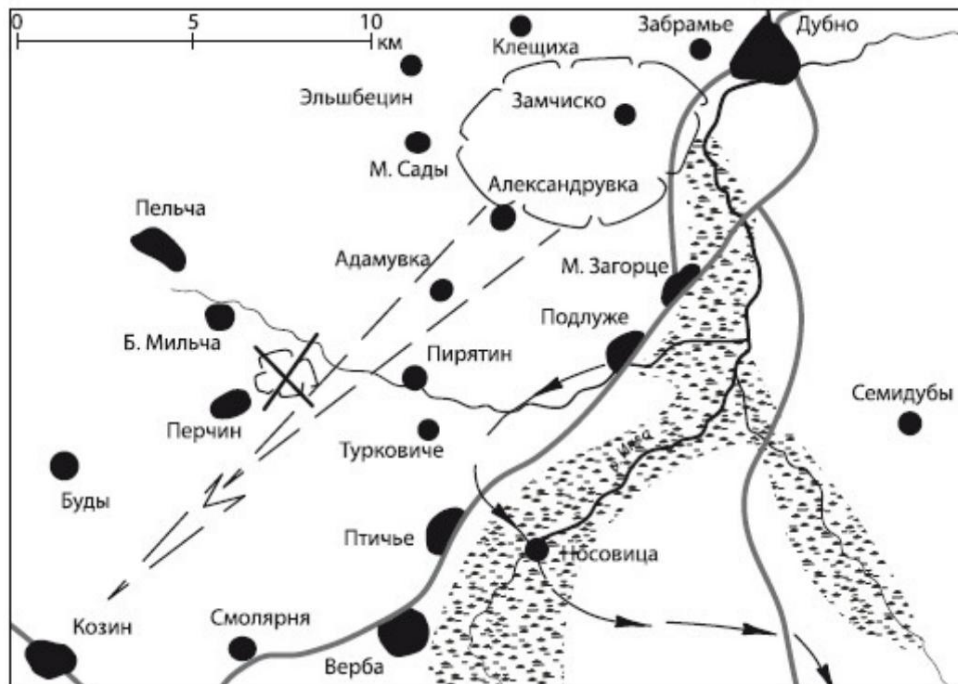
- I'm your commander. Without putting his pistol in his holster, Ryabyshev moved along the column, stopping companies, battalions, ordering them to occupy the defense with the front to the northwest ... "[211]

The long day of June 28 ended on the morning of June 29, when a member of the Military Council of the SWF, corps commissar Vashugin returned to the front headquarters, went to his office and shot himself. **The Last**

Battle After the remnants of the 7th Motorized and 12th Panzer Divisions, which broke through to Dubno, the 34th Panzer Division found itself almost completely alone. Two things are hidden behind the word "almost". First, on the east bank of the river. Ikva, the 140th Rifle Division was located 10 km from the 34th Panzer, but it "strongly entrenched itself on the line of defense" and a few days later, without interacting with Vasiliev's tankers, rolled back to the east.

Secondly, the 212th motorized division of the 15th mechanized corps was still in the Brody area, but it was not to remain there for long. Already in the evening of June 28, the division **"under the onslaught of superior forces (???) of the enemy withdrew to a new line: height 261.0, Gaye Smolensk, Glushin, Goloskovitsa** (all this is 5-8 km south-west of Brody. - **M.S.)". [198]** The next day, June 29, the enemy really appeared - the German 57th Infantry Division from the turn of the river. Slonovka went on the offensive against Brody, as a result of which, on the morning of July 1, the 212th MD was already in the area of Cape Oleyuv (36 km south of Brody). There it was defeated by units of the recently introduced German 14th Panzer Corps that had approached from the west: **"In the area of Ratschche, Oleyuv, the commander of the 212th MD, Major General Baranov, went missing during the battle with the enemy's infantry and tanks that had broken through [87] and chief of staff of the division, Colonel Pershakov.** After the loss of command, the division quickly and irreversibly fell apart - by July 12, only 745 people left the Dnieper ... **[198]**

Meanwhile, the German command was hastily pulling everything they could to Dubno, because the Soviet tank division next to the most important transport hub was like a nail in a shoe for them. In the early morning of June 28, advanced units of the 111th Infantry Division approached Dubno, and by noon the main forces of the division also pulled up, which saved the Germans from the immediate loss of the city. Unfortunately, they were also helped by the slowness of the command of the "Popel group", which resumed the offensive only on the evening of June 28. (Fig. 19.)



Rice. 19. Battle of Dubno

June 28th. At 17:00, on the orders of Brigadier Commissar Comrade Popel, the 34th TD attacked Dubno for the second time. 67th tank regiment in the direction of Zabramya (from the south) with one battalion of a motorized rifle regiment. The 68th tank regiment attacks Dubno from the

west in the direction of Aleksandruvka, Elshbetsin, Kleschikha. The enemy introduces up to two divisions of artillery from areas west of Dubno. Enemy mortar units in the Zabramye area. In Dubno - cavalry, infantry, carts and enemy tanks. The division is overtaken by darkness. As a result of the battle, up to 30 tanks were knocked out and burned, communication

with individual tanks that slipped into the western outskirts of Dubno was lost ... "[214] Such a

dispassionate description of events is in stark contrast to how this battle is described in ZhBD 48 of the Wehrmacht Labor Code: ***"June 28 . 19.20. In the afternoon, towards evening, the enemy at the front in front of Dubno pulled up reserves and artillery, carried out reconnaissance in battle with tanks and infantry. Since the command of the corps expects a full-scale attack this night or early in the morning, it requested the Tank Group for reinfo***

may fall. 55 AK satisfies this request of the corps and allocates one battalion. 20.00.

Aerial reconnaissance established the presence of about 80 tanks in the forest southwest of Dubno! (if the compiler of the document knew how many tanks were in 8 MK and how many of them Dubno could have, then he would probably put not an exclamation point, but a question mark. - M.S.) . **24.00. The situation near**

Dubno is critical, the enemy has been attacking with infantry and tanks in the western part of the city since late evening. The outcome of the battles is still unclear. The commandant of Dubno requested urgent reinforcements, but the corps could not yet provide additional forces that night. June 29. 06.00. Our troops managed, straining

all their forces, to push back the advancing enemy with large forces from the outskirts of Dubno. From 04:00 the enemy continues to attack with infantry and tanks, among them super-heavy tanks with a 150-mm caliber gun (i.e. KV-2) were spotted . Since the offensive of their own tanks is being postponed, the situation in the Dubno region remains serious even further ... ” With the use of their own tanks, the Germans had a problem,

the discussion of which, often turning into a squabble, was carried out on June 28 and 29. Ultimately, it was decided to send the 16th Motorized Division of the 48th Tank Corps of the Wehrmacht to help the 11th Panzer Division, which had flown in the Ostrog area from all over the run into the 16th Army of the Second Strategic Echelon of the KA, the task was to attack from the south and defeat Soviet troops at Dubno were placed in front of the 16th Panzer Division, whose tank regiment was able to approach Verba only at 14:00 on June 29. And the battle near Dubno, meanwhile, continued to blaze with unrelenting force: **“From 13.00, the enemy continues to vigorously attack Dubno with infantry and tanks, with strong artillery support.**

Apparently, in the course of our counterattacks, the enemy was thrown back. 14.35. A radiogram was received: "Dubno is taken by the Russians!" Fortunately, the radiogram has not been confirmed.

Nevertheless, the situation remains tense. Reports are accumulating, but the picture remains unclear. Apparently, the enemy managed to break through the battle formations of the 111th Infantry Division southwest of Dubno and continue the offensive on the eastern outskirts of the city. The provision of the 111th pd is also still

don't clear.

17.00. Finally, a report arrives from the commandant of the city, Major General von Stumpfelf: all enemy attacks are repelled, destroyed

a large number of enemy tanks. The 44th Infantry Division and units of the reconnaissance battalion of the 16th Infantry Division [to Dubno] have not yet arrived..." [188]

described with the same conciseness:

"From 6.00 the division continues to attack Dubno from the south and west and the main forces of the tank regiments leave: 67 TP to the southern outskirts of Zabramye, 68 TP - 800 m west of Dubno. SME infantry suffers losses of up to 40%. Tank losses: 67 TP up to 40, 68 TP - 35 (these are pieces, not percentages. - M.S.). Attempts to

advance individual groups of tanks to Dubno are shot by artillery (recall that Vasiliev's division was armed mainly with light T-26s with bulletproof armor. - **M.S.) from Dubno, Ivanye, Golovshchitsa. The KV tanks thrown [on the attack] by enemy artillery are put out of action, two KV tanks are burned down, the attack is bogged down due to the lack of artillery and combined arms infantry ...**

The division loses all contact with other parts of the Red Army. In this battle, on the outskirts of Dubno, the following were destroyed: 9 enemy anti-tank guns, up to 30 tanks, up to 65 motorcycles, 34 trucks. Killed and wounded, the enemy lost up to 200 people.

The division is left with 65 T-26s, 5 KVs (of which one is not suitable for firing), 2 BTs. The enemy in the area of the regiments conducts reinforced artillery fire. The KP area is continuously shelled over the area. The enemy dropped leaflets from the air.

On the night of June 29-30 at Verba (i.e., about 15 km south of Dubno) there was an episode that is extremely vividly described in ZhBD 48 TC:

"At night, a disappointing report was received from the 16th TD that the battle group, which had advanced in the Verba area, ran into superior enemy tank forces and was forced to retreat. In addition, she had to fight a night battle with superior enemy infantry. The enemy units, attacking with wild cries of "Hurrah!", Used flamethrowers. The battle group had to retreat even further south of Verba. June 30, 1941. Apparently, the 16th TD suffered heavy losses during heavy night fighting in

the Ptichye

area ... " [188] no less dramatic

On June 29, the Zikenius combat group (tank regiment, one battery of 88-mm anti-aircraft guns and one motorized infantry battalion) received the task of passing through Verba to Dubno. After a heavy battle, the battle group reached Ptichye in the evening ... At 21.30, the Russians launched a counterattack with tanks and infantry. The Russians fought extremely fiercely, often several people at the same time jumped on [our] tanks and fired at the crew members. In addition, they attached explosives to stationary tanks. Therefore, the tank regiment around 2300 was withdrawn south of Verba. 10 heavy tanks were lost (half of all Pz-IV divisions. - M.S.). The attack on Dubno, ordered for the morning of June 30, therefore had to be postpone

What was it? Where did the "superior forces" come from, who attacked the German tankers "with wild cries of 'Hurrah!', so much so that the next day the tank regiment of the 16th TD was not ready for action? In the entry for June 30 in the ZhBD of the 34th Panzer Division, there are only a few words that can be somehow connected with this event: ***"The rear of the division and units during June 28 and 29 organized a defense with tanks, destroying 10 enemy tanks and more 10 motorcycles. Knocked out 12 enemy tanks, most of them medium tanks, are used [by us] to fight artillery in Verba and Ptichye.*** The same message is repeated in the August report on the division's combat operations: ***"With bold initiative actions, even individual of our vehicles, the enemy does not let him get close, withdraws and runs, leaving any materiel ... This confirms the fact of the battle of the rear of the 34th TD, when 12 enemy tanks abandoned by crews. [215]***

But other options are also possible. Perhaps the Germans in Verba were attacked by some units of the 7th Motorized Division, which broke through there on the afternoon of June 28th. It is possible that these were units of the 140th Infantry Division, who decided to cross the Ikva and attack the enemy (and the Germans imagined the presence of tanks in the dark and with fear). Be that as it may, but the

success of a daring night attack could change little. The ring around the "Popel group", which was thinning in battles, was tightening ever tighter. The 44th Infantry Division approached Dubno, then the 299th Infantry Division, which replaced the 111th Infantry Division, which went on the offensive on Kremenets. On the evening of June 30, it was decided (perhaps erroneously) to break out of the encirclement in two different directions: to withdraw the rear (including the medical battalion with the wounded) to the east, across the river. Ikva, and for combat units to break through to Kozin ***"with the task of reaching the Kozin-Kremenets road to connect with 14 cd and 140 cd and further joint action with them . "***

The first part of the task was partially solved: ***"With the onset of darkness on 30.6, the rear of the division with a fight breaks through to Ptichye and further across the bridge near Staraya Nosovitsa to the highway, from where they go to Kremenets, Starokonstantinov and further in depth, losing up to 50% in Ptichye machines, completely rendered useless by artillery fire, a bakery and a pontoon park of a pontoon battalion.*** By 7 o'clock in the morning on July 1, the remaining combat units approached the Bolshaya Milcha cape. There their last battle took place: ***"July 1. 7.00. The division***

approached Milch and the bulk of the tanks were drawn into the northern and southern outskirts of Milch. The enemy with a strength of up to 4 batteries, up to 40 anti-tank guns and mortars attacks the division ... Fire from the Bol area. Milch and forests west of Buda and fire from up to 40 enemy tanks from the forests northeast of Piryatin 34 TD loses all materiel in battle. As a result of the battle, the division was left with: 13 T-26s, 4 T-34s and 12 wheeled vehicles. There is no fuel in the cars. In the battle area near Bolshaya Milcha, the division commander, Colonel Vasiliev, deputy. commander for political affairs, regimental commissar Nemtsev and PNO-1 34 TD captain Shevchenko, acting north of Bol. Milcha is part of the tank group 67 TP, they do not leave t

The personnel of the division's units and the remaining materiel, by order of the brigade commissar Comrade Popel, are transferred to the forest west of Belgorodka (a forest between Buda and Verba. - M.S.). There is no gasoline and food, the remaining materiel is not capable of movement. By the beginning of darkness, the chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Kurepin, and deputy. division commander Major Bozhko. The personnel of the division collected 395 peo

Overnight in the forest to the west of Belgorod. An order was given by lieutenant colonel Kurepin and brigade commissar comrade Popel to render the remaining materiel, ammunition unusable and exit from the encirclement of the detachment to the forests east of

Verba ... "[214] Having traveled 250 km through the forests and swamps of Volyn [88], "Popel's group " On July 24, she crossed the front line in the Belokorovich area. From the encirclement came out: 46 people of senior and middle command staff, 30 people of junior command staff, 73 ordinary soldiers. The division commander, the chief of staff and the head of the operational department of the division headquarters, the commander and chief of staff of the 67th tank regiment, the chief of staff of the 68th tank regiment, the commander, chief of staff and two commanders of battalions of the 34th motorized rifle regiment died or disappeared without a trace

Chapter 2.4 Lutsk

Brief summary of the

chapter In the state military archive of Germany, in the fund of the 3rd Tank Corps of the Wehrmacht, the text is stored on two sheets of paper. [232]
Top heading: ***“3rd Corps in the 1941 military campaign against Soviet Russia. Operational breakthrough to the outskirts of Kyiv. 22.06. - 07/10/41.***

Distracting from the bravura intonation of military propaganda, one should admit that the main outline of events is described quite reliably:

“When early in the morning of June 22, 1941, the infantry divisions of the 3rd Corps, with the roar of three hundred guns, launched an offensive across the river. Bug in the Hrubieszow area, probably even the biggest optimist could not imagine that already on the 19th day of the operation, on July 10th, 3 TC would reach its first operational target, which

was 450 kilometers away. How far was Kyiv! The Silesians of the 298th and the Austrians of the 44th Infantry Division in the first two days break through the stubbornly defended frontier fortifications of the enemy in a bold onslaught. Already on the second day, it was possible to throw forward first the 14th Panzer Division through the left flank of the corps, and then the 13th Panzer Division through its right flank and to the south of it. Both tank divisions competed with each other in advancing towards the indicated goal after they entered the operational area southeast

While the 298th Infantry Division still had to fight a fierce battle for the reliable capture of Vladimir-Volynsky, the tanks of the corps are fighting in the first tank battle near Aleksandrovka and to the south of it (usually referred to in Soviet documents as the battle near the settlement of Voinitsa. — M.S.). It ends with the destruction of 267 enemy tanks and thus with complete success. Already on June 25, Lutsk was occupied, the river

was forced. Styr ... The 13th Panzer Division, operating away from the "tank road" (highway Lutsk, Rovno, Novograd-Volynsky. - M.S.), rapidly advanced southeast of Lutsk and, after several heavy battles, captured the city of Rovno (28 June), while the 14th Panzer Division had to strain all its forces in order to hold Lutsk against again and again powerful enemy counterattacks from the northeast and east. As soon as 14 TD in its hard struggle will be replaced

tirelessly following it, but still tied up by heavy fighting, the 298th infantry division, the tank division will follow the 13th TD to Rovno ...

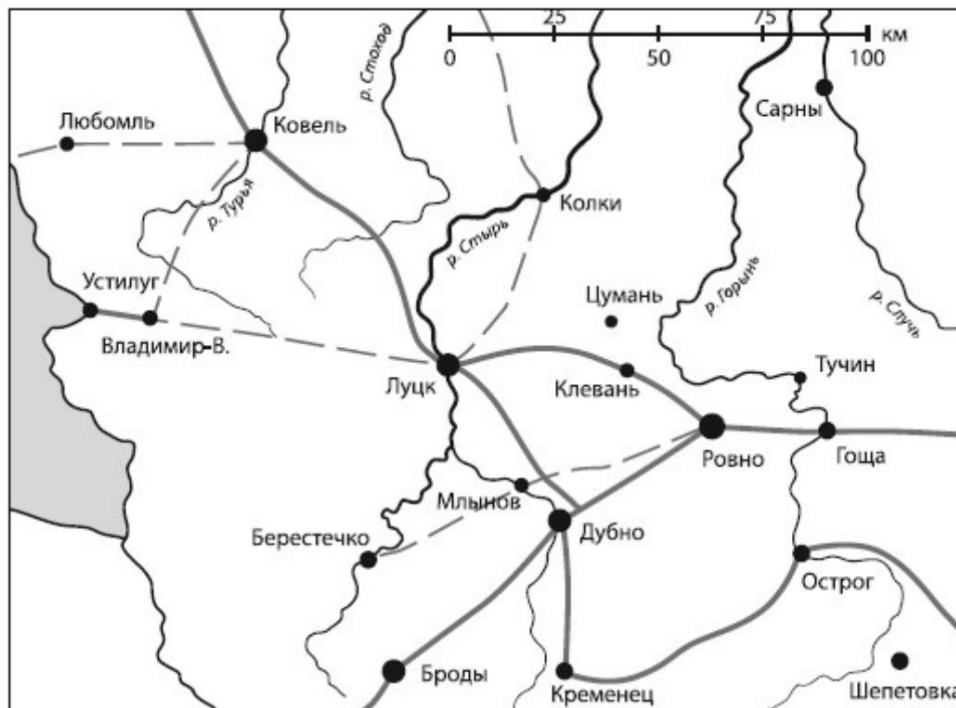
Both tank divisions are now at the river. Goryn. At first, to the south, and soon to the north of the "tank road", as well as along it itself, the river is forced to fight, and the troops move further to the river. Sluch, thus leading to the modern and heavily fortified "Stalin Line". Barely crossed Goryn, as heavy rain washes away all the dirt roads on the Ukrainian black soil. While the 14th TD is forced to break through again along the "tank road", the 13th TD is painfully, transport after transport, crawling off-road to the river. Case.

For the 14th Panzer Division, already 20 km west of Novograd Volynsky, a stubborn struggle begins for the deeply echeloned "Stalin Line". Here it is necessary to take the first bunkers advanced forward, while the 13th Panzer Division, thanks to the extraordinary energy of the command and soldiers, unexpectedly quickly coped with all road difficulties and on July 6 is ready to start breaking through the "Stalin Line" near Gulsk (n.p. near the river The case is 10 km southeast of Novograd Volynsky. - M.S.) . The next day, Gulsk was taken along with pillboxes and a crossing across the river, a bridgehead was created [on the eastern bank of the river] , on July 8, units entered the

"tank road" east of the fortifications. The situation is different with the 14th Panzer Division. She had to "take the bull by the horns." In a five-day hard struggle, the division, mature and for such a situation, overcomes the fortifications. The city was occupied, the river was forced, and thus the "Stalin Line" was broken in this place, as well as immediately south of Novograd-Volynsky, where the 25th motorized division between two tank divisions successfully

joins the offensive. Now there are no more stops. It takes a little more than 24 hours for the corps with the advanced 13 TD to reach Kiev on the offensive through Zhitomir, where separate skirmishes are still taking place. Already early in the morning of July 10, the first tanks of the 13th TD reach Irpen and thus stand directly in front of the inner defensive ring of

Kyiv ... The corps' own losses are 806 killed, 388 missing missing and 2426 wounded.



Rice. 20. The offensive zone of the 3rd tank corps of the Wehrmacht Another

"short course of history" of hostilities in the direction of Lutsk, Rivne can be considered directives of the Military Council of the 5th Army, issued in late June, early July 1941. The corresponding archival file was declassified in May 2012, and now we have the opportunity to get acquainted with how the situation was seen from the other (eastern) side of the front: ***"To the commander (written by hand: 22 MK) Deputy. political part (inscribed from***

hands: MK 22)

26.6.41

The enemy, impudently acting in small groups, breaking through the spaces unoccupied by our troops to the location of our units, disorganizes work, creates panic among the less stable part of the fighters ... Immediately with a firm hand, up to the application of disciplinary measures - execution, put things in order. The Military Council of the Army warns you of your enormous personal responsibility to the Soviet Motherland. It has been established that tonight on 26-27 the enemy will make an attempt to force the river. Styr. Immediately during the night from 26 to 27, and in

the future, arrange the command staff for subunits and units; specifically explain what kind of flight from the front there will be execution. In the event of the appearance of such facts, resolutely put things in order" [89]. [233]

"Order No. 02 to the troops of the 5th Army

28.6.41

The criminal attitude towards the people's property - weapons, ammunition, military and transport vehicles - assumes wide proportions. During the six days of the war, a lot of materiel was lost. Quite serviceable both military and transport vehicles, weapons and other types of property are thrown on the roads. Worse, no action is taken against those who commit this heinous crime. I ORDER: Commanders

of formations to establish a strict accounting of property and for the loss and abandonment of property immediately bring to the Military Field Court. [234] "Directive of the

Military Council of the 5th Army. To all commanders of corps, divisions and their deputies for political

affairs. Understand that this task is central, because the Novograd Volyn direction is the key to Kiev ... The Military Council demands from you, no matter what the cost, unquestioningly, without paying attention to any reasons, to carry out the task. Novograd-Volynskoye, Zhytomyrskoe highway should not be given to the enemy in any case. Novograd-Volynsky UR to restore and turn into an impregnable fortress for the enemy.

For unauthorized abandonment of the front and unwillingness to persistently fulfill the assigned tasks, the perpetrators should immediately be tried by the Military Tribunal, regardless of their faces ... It's time to understand that we ourselves create all the conditions for withdrawal. It is shameful when your subordinates, from air raids and bombing, from explosions of artillery shells and the whistle of bullets, abandon defense or move

forward and begin to retreat in an unauthorized panic. It is time to put an end to the impotence of some commanders and political workers. This disgrace the Military Council does not intend to endure any longer. The Supreme Headquarters in its directive, point 6, requires, regardless of the faces, to shoot not only alarmists, but chiefs who allowed panic and unauthorized with

The most concise statement of the meaning of what happened can be the line with the numbers of German losses that was given above. The 3rd Panzer Corps consists of three divisions: the 13th and 14th Panzer, and the 25th Motorized. Taking into account the corps, about 60 thousand people are recruited. And the total losses for 19 days of non-stop offensive to great depths, with the forcing of three rivers and the breakthrough of two fortified areas, amounted to only 3620 people. Six percent of the original number of personnel. Each division lost an average of 55-60 people per day in such "fierce battles"; moreover, these are not irretrievable, but total losses, these figures include the wounded, the sick, and the fallen

from the car, twisted their leg, drank damp water from the stream in the heat [90]. Yes, of course, if the Red Army had not resisted at all, German losses would have been even less ... **In the**

border zone I immediately

hasten to warn the reader against an erroneous and unfair conclusion: the orders in the 5th Army were not at all worse than those of its neighbors. Rather, on the contrary - having lost almost all heavy military equipment, the formations of the 5th Army by mid-July retained up to 30-40% of their personnel, which was a completely uncommon phenomenon. It's just that the documents of the Army headquarters have been preserved (this alone indicates that the 5th Army was not the worst) and by the time this book was written they were declassified. The management funds of the 6th Army will be declassified - and exactly the same directives will be found there. In the meantime, it is possible, for example, to

quote Order No. 027 dated 5.6.41, signed by the Military Council of the 6th Army: ***"...Increase the demands on subordinates. Demand from them not to give up a single inch of Soviet land (there should have been a dot, but there is no dot. - M.S.) without inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. In each division, have a barrage detachment 2-3 km from the front line and at the***

crossroads, where to collect those who left the battlefield and return to the front. [236] The situation in the Lutsk direction by the morning of June 22 was also quite typical for the right (northern) flank of the Southwestern Front (see Fig. 8). The enemy acted "strictly according to the charter" - he concentrated a powerful strike force in the Hrubieszow area consisting of the 298th, 44th and 299th infantry, 13th and 14th tank divisions, and also formed a fettering group consisting of the 56th and 62nd Infantry Divisions. The last two (united as part of the 17th Army Corps) offensive along the road to Lyuboml, Kovel were supposed to cover the left flank of the shock group and prevent the transfer of Red Army

units from Kovel to Lutsk direction. The direction of the main blow for the Germans was the Vladimir Volynsky-Lutsk line, the main task at the first stage of the operation was to capture the crossings on the river. Styr and exit to the motorway Lutsk, Rovno, Zhytomyr. There is a highway from the border Ustilug to Lutsk (and in this sense, the task of the 3rd Tank Corps of the Wehrmacht was somewhat easier than that of the 48th, which was supposed to make its way to the Styr River near Berestechko along broken country roads). On the other hand, the task of the defending side was also facilitated by the fact that the area north of the "tank road" is a swampy forest that is completely impassable for the German army; accordingly, the Germans had to break throu

or try to get around the enemy from the south, along a roadless, cut through by many small rivers, but elevated, open and relatively little marshland. In a situation of incomplete deployment and

concentration of troops of the Kyiv OVO (South-Western Front), the deployment of Soviet troops by the time the war began was as follows. Directly in the border zone were three rifle divisions: the 45th and 62nd south and north of the Lyuboml-Kovel road and one rifle division (87th rifle division) in the Vladimir-Volynsky region and to the south. Another rifle division (135th rifle division) was located in the Kivertsy area (12 km northeast of Lutsk). The 1st PTABR was also concentrated there, fully equipped, equipped with guns and tractors. The 41st tank division of the 22nd mechanized corps was stationed near Vladimir-Volynsky, while the main forces of the mechanized corps (19th tank and 215th motorized divisions, corps units) were located in the area of Rovno, 150 km from the border.

Thus, in the Lutsk direction, the 5th Army could oppose one rifle and one tank division to three infantry divisions of the enemy (and two tank divisions of the 3rd TK standing behind them) at the start of the war. The situation is, to put it mildly, difficult. On the other hand, there was an opportunity to drastically change it in their favor: to castle to the south the practically inactive 62nd Rifle Division, to bring the 135th Rifle Division, the 1st PTABR and a powerful artillery "fist" to Vladimir Volynsky (the 5th Army had four separate corps artillery regiments and one artillery regiment of the RGK). Yes, it took time to implement all this - after all, the enemy also needed time to build crossings through the border Bug under a hail of bombing attacks and, under a flurry of machine-gun and artillery fire, to transfer the pillboxes of Vladimir-Volynsky UR [91] to the high eastern coast tens of thousands of people, horses,

carts and cars.

Alas, even theoretically (not to mention the harsh prose of real life), the troops of the 5th Army were not going to act in this way. Why? Because a cover plan and a defense plan are not the same thing at all (which was discussed a lot in Part 1 of our book). The history of the defeat of the 5th Army provides one of the clearest illustrations of this indisputable truth. As part of the general strategic plan of the Red Army, the troops of

the 5th Army (reinforced, moreover, by one rifle and one mechanized corps of the second echelon of the Southwestern Front) were to advance along the line of Kovel, Lyuboml, Lublin. It was within the framework of the general task assigned to the 5th Army that a plan was developed

operational deployment of Army troops and a cover plan as its integral part. In short and simply put - everything was drawn to Kovel. On the eve of the war, three of the five artillery regiments of the Army were already east of Kovel, in the Povur camps. The field command post of the 5th Army was deployed in the area of Kol. Byten (20 km southeast of Kovel), and at one in the morning on June 22, the Army command headed by the chief of staff, Major General D.S. Pisarevsky, departed there. **[43]** Moreover, this exit of the Army headquarters to the field command post (an obvious sign of preparations for the imminent start of hostilities) occurred before the so-called. "Guideline number one".

By order of the commander of the 5th Army, Major General Potapov, given at the beginning of the fourth hour of the morning on June 22, the commanders of the formations opened the "red packets" and began to carry out tasks according to the cover plan. In particular, Combat Order No. 1 for the 22nd mechanized corps [92] prescribed an exit to the area of the southern and southwestern suburbs of Kovel by 8 am M-3, and for the 41st tank division of this corps - by 17-00 M-1 . **[269]** As a result, on the morning of June 22, the 41st Panzer Division, the main of the reserves of the 5th Army command actually located at a critical point, went north along the Vladimir-Volynsky-Kovel road, literally "opening the door" in front of the Germans advancing along the Lutsk highway . Two other divisions of the 22nd mechanized corps (19th TD and 215th MD) moved from the Rovno region again to Kovel.

The report "On the combat operations of the 19th Panzer Division for the period 22.6-22.7 41" makes it possible to trace the route along which the division advanced to Kovel. **[237]** This is by no means the highway Rivne, Lutsk, Kovel. A multi-kilometer column of a tank division crawled through the forest, about 10–20 km north of the highway, but since there are no straight paths in the forest, the route of movement is a complex, winding curve. As a result, the already long route significantly increased its length, and the division approached the northeastern suburbs of Kovel only late in the evening of June 23 (twenty-third).

The fact that a tank division, equipped with low-powered T-26s, was able to cover about 200 km through a dense forest in two days can be considered an unparalleled achievement (German tankers never showed their noses in such places). Nothing but harm (loss of time, increased consumption of gasoline, overwork of the driver), such an "achievement" did not give, and the division ended up 50 km from the field of the upcoming battle. Why didn't they use the highway for the march? There is no answer, no discussion of this issue in the report. But we can assume that the solution is very simple: the nomination took place according to

the pre-war cover plan (this is not a "guess" at all, but a fact), this plan, being an integral part of the general operational plan of the war, provided for the most covert advance of the Red Army troops to the border; that's why a huge rumbling steel column was removed "out of sight" into the dense forest.

The tasks envisaged by the pre-war cover plan were conscientiously (stubbornly, thoughtlessly, stupidly - the reader can choose his own option) carried out all day, because, as Vladimírsky writes, "during June 22, the Army commander and headquarters did not yet have the data on the situation that would **require changing the grouping of forces and making adjustments to the tasks of the troops determined by the cover plan.** With the same stoic calmness, Vladimírsky states: **"The bridges [across the Bug] were guarded by the NKVD troops, who did not prepare them for the explosion, and therefore they went to the enemy in perfect working order."** [43] As a result, the first hours of the war in the Lutsk sector were quite standard. In the Journal of Combat Operations 3 TK of the Wehrmacht we read:

"3.45. 44th Infantry Division. Bridge over the river Bug near Grodek (railway bridge southwest of Ustilug. — *M.S.*) **is taken...**

4.00. 298th Infantry Division on the Zabuzhe, Vydranitsa road (north Ustilug. — *M.S.*). **No enemy artillery fire...**

4.35. The 44th Infantry Division reached the western outskirts of the forest south of the Berezhina (settlement 3 km from the Bug. - *M.S.*) . **No enemy resistance at the front line of defense ... 5.00. 298 pd at 3.50 began**

construction of a bridge across the Bug at Lushkov (settlement 4 km northwest of Ustilug. - *M.S.*) . **The crossing of light artillery has begun ... 44 pd began the construction of a military bridge. Two pontoons**

bridges ready...

5.50. Report to the headquarters of the 1st Tank Group. Russians caught by surprise. At the forefront only patrols (hours) ...

6.40. The 298th infantry division took the bridges at Pyatydnia (n.p. at the intersection of the motorway with the Lug River, about halfway between Ustilug and Vladimir-Volynsky; Schulze's company will continue to be repeatedly mentioned as the forward detachment of the division. - *M.S.*) ... **Commander The 1st Tank Group allowed the introduction of tank divisions into battle.**

8 - 00. Report on the situation to the headquarters of the 1st TGr: two-thirds of the artillery 44 pd on the eastern side of the Bug ...

10–15. The bridge near Gorodlo (7 km northwest of Ustilug. - *M.S.*) **is ready. Two-thirds of the divisional artillery of 298 infantry regiment on the eastern coast ... "** [238]

By the time the war began, the 87th Rifle Division remained in camps near Vladimir-Volynsky, at the border there was only one battalion from each of the three regiments of the division, sent there to participate in the emergency construction of bunkers, and a rare chain of frontier posts. By 10 o'clock in the morning (according to "Soviet time"), the main forces of the 87th Rifle Division began to approach the battlefield. From that moment until the evening of June 23, a fierce battle broke out in the zone between the Bug and Lug rivers, at some moments of which the Germans were driven back to the border in some areas. The

commander of the 5th Army ordered the commander of the 41st tank division to leave one tank regiment in the Vladimir-Volynsky area and transfer it to the operational subordination of the 87th rifle division; the order was executed exactly half and two tank battalions were left to help the infantry [93]. [239] Be that as it may, counterattacks by Soviet troops with the participation of tanks were noted, and in the ZhBD 3 TK of the Wehrmacht, however, judging by the context, we are talking about small groups of tanks, and not at all about two battalions (about 100 tanks). In the evening, Soviet aviation also appeared - an entry in ZhBD 3 TC dated 21.00 fixes "two enemy air raids on Ustilug". This was the first, only and, at the same time, a very successful episode of the combat operations of the South-Western Front Air Force bomber aviation on the first day of the war: 34 SB bombers in two waves from a height of 1–2 km dropped 226 FAB-100 bombs **"on the accumulation of enemy tanks and infantry"**, irretrievable losses of aircraft did not have. [240] In general, the battle near the

border developed for the Germans much less successfully than near the right neighbor, in the zone of the 48th Panzer Corps. On the second day of the war, at 12.45 on June 23, Field Marshal Rundstedt, the commander of the Yug GA, arrived at the command post of the 3rd Tank Corps; as a result of the discussion, they agreed that **"the enemy in front of the 3rd shopping mall is stronger than the neighbors, as the Russians are trying to protect Vladimir-Volynsky and the important road from west to east."** [238] The enemy was not stronger (more numerous), the enemy turned out to be more stubborn, but even this stubbornness could not radically change the situation. The forces of the 87th Rifle Division were only enough to hold the central section of the defense line near the Ustilug, Vladimir-Volynsky highway for two days. To the south, there was nothing and no one, except for the

garrisons of the bunkers of the fortified area. By noon on June 23, the 44th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht broke through the line of pillboxes and began to cover the 87th Rifle Division from the south. The appearance of German motorcyclists on the flank and in the rear of the division led to the usual consequences for the Red Army - the units randomly retreated to the Lug River and beyond it, w

Vladimir-Volynsky, and the 16th Infantry Regiment rolled back right up to Ozyutychi (settlement on the right bank of the Turya, 25 km east of Vladimir-Volynsky).

By the morning of June 24, the main forces of the 87th Rifle Division were surrounded in the Selets area (a settlement near the Lug River, 8 km south of Vladimir-Volynsky). The units that remained combat-ready continued to resist all day on June 24 and at dawn on June 25, having broken through the encirclement, they left for a remote forest area between the Turya and Stokhod rivers. In this battle, the division commander, Major General F. Alyabushev, died. The operational report of the headquarters of the South-Western Front No. 14 of June 30 reports: ***"Personnel of the 87th Rifle Division in the amount of 200 people under the command of [Chief of Staff of the Division] Colonel Blank broke through the encirclement and joined the 15th SC."*** [241] 200 people out of about 6-7 thousand people who were surrounded [94]. Concluding the story about the military

operations of the 87th SD, it should be noted some quantitative parameters that can be used to assess the real content of events. The losses of the 44th infantry division of the Wehrmacht amounted to 26 killed and 78 wounded, a total of 104 people [95]. [242] The 14th Panzer Division in the battles on June 23 (on the first day of the war, it was still crossing the Bug) amounted to 7 killed and 19 wounded, a total of 26 people. [243] The losses of the 298th Infantry Division during the first ten days of the war were much greater and amounted to 520 people; even if we attribute half of these losses to the battles near Vladimir-Volynsky, then in this case it turns out that the Germans paid for the defeat of the 87th rifle division with the loss of about 400 people (including the wounded and sick). It is rather difficult to correlate these figures with stories about "fierce fighting and stubborn resistance" of the division, which actually had 448 light and 170 heavy machine guns, 149 mortars, 95 cannons, 32 122 mm howitzers and 12 heavy howitzers of 152 mm caliber, supported by two tank battalions. [244] Did it all shoot paper balls? Or did not everyone shoot?

In those days, the losses of an unarmed "enemy" were significantly greater. In a memorandum compiled by one of the main organizers and participants of the event, this is described as follows: ***"6/23/41 at 11 o'clock. 30 min. in the***

prison of the mountains In Lutsk, an operational group of UNKGB and UNKVD workers arrived in the Volyn region, the head of which was the captain of the State Security Comrade. Rozov.

In the same place, near the prison, Chief called me. UNKGB, Captain of the State Security Comrade. Belotserkovsky, who ordered me to hand over to the task force comrade. Rozova of all the convicts kept in the prison of the mountains. Lutsk under the articles of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR 54 p. 2.11 and, especially, [members of] the OUN. Finding out the situation in more detail, the captain of the State Security, Comrade Rozov, ordered me to hand over all the z/k at 54-2, 11 for execution within 20 minu

located from the mountains. Lutsk, 7 km away (comrade Chekists had a low opinion about the combat capability of the Red

Army. - M.S.) ... About 800 people were selected and brought to the prison's utility yard, who were immediately shot on the spot by the aforementioned task force, fighters of a company of escort troops NKVD and commanding and supervisory staff of the prison. Returning from the inner prison, I am deputy. I didn't find the head of the prison Leskin near the prison, but with the help of the prison workers I found Leskin half a kilometer from the prison, where he ran away from cowardice to hide ... 20 minutes after the execution of the prison, we received an indication that the enemy was not 7 km away, but in 25 km, and we immediately began to clean up the corpses. All the corpses of more than 70 people sentenced to CMN and about 800 under investigation were buried by us and at the places where the corpses were located they were watered with kerosene and burned out

In addition, shot by the prison guards and military units in the vicinity of the prison, convicts who tried to escape from prison. To clean up these corpses by order of the Head. UNKVD created a group of police officers, which removed all the corpses. In general, about 1,000 people were shot in prison and near the prison. About 1,000 people were left in prison, most of whom were charged under domestic art. Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR. Mountain prison. Lutsk together with the commander of a company of escort troops Art. Lieutenant Fakhurdinov and the entire staff of the prison staff, we left after losing contact with the UNKVD military units on 25.6.41

at 23:00. 30 minutes.... Beginning prison department of the UNKVD in the Volyn region.

state security sergeant / Stan / " Sergeant Stan claims that he shot only 1 thousand people and the same number" were left in prison. However, in Special Communication No. 85426 dated June 28, 1941, the head of the prison department of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR, State Security Captain Filippov, writes:

"At 12.00 hours on 23.06, by order of the head of Comrade. In the camp, the prisoners were taken back to the exercise yard and from all the prisoners 14 people were selected, convicted by the Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Court of 06/26/40, 30 people convicted under the domestic articles of the Criminal Code, and 40 young people ... After the selection of 84 of these prisoners, the remaining in the exercise yard, about 2,000 prisoners were shot. All records and personal files of the prisoners were burnt..." The same figure (2,000 shot in the prison of Lutsk) is also given in the document "List of Departure and Movement of Echelons in Prisons of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR". [186]

It's hard to say who's lying here. Maybe the big bosses are lying, who were afraid to tell even big bosses that they left a thousand living prisoners in prison; maybe the sergeant is lying, who arbitrarily shot another thousand people before leaving Lutsk and does not want to admit it. The time was like this... **Tank battle near Voinitsa** By the morning of June 24, the situation

at the front was as follows. On the Kovel direction, the enemy's actions were crowned with complete and even above-planned success. Two infantry divisions of the 17th Army Corps were "joined" by a mythical "tank column" moving along the highway from Brest to Kovel. Vladimirsky writes that the air reconnaissance of the front was the source of disinformation. The commander of the 15th SC, Colonel Fedyuninsky, with incomprehensible haste and readiness to be deceived, perceived this "misinformation", after which there could no longer be any talk of any regrouping of forces from the Kovel direction to the Lutsk direction. Moreover, units of the 62nd Rifle Division were pulled closer to Lyuboml, thus eliminating even the hypothetical possibility of releasing the 87th Rifle Division, surrounded to the south of Vladimir-Volynsky. Moreover, in the future, preparing to "repel a tank strike from the direction of Brest," Fedyuninsky obtained permission to bend the flank, that is, to surrender Lyuboml and withdraw troops to Kovel.

While a tragic farce was being played out north of Kovel, a tragic denouement was brewing in the Lutsk direction. The 298th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht occupied Vladimir-Volynsky, pushing part of the forces to the north, along the road to Verba, in order to repel a possible counterattack by the Soviet troops (this precaution, as subsequent events showed, was not superfluous). The 44th Infantry completed the encirclement and defeat of the 87th Rifle Division. South of the battlefield, the 299th Infantry Division was advancing, and since there was simply no enemy in front of it, the offensive developed at the pace of a forced march: on the evening of June 22, the division reached the river. Lug in the Yanevichi area (22 km south of Vladimir-Volynsky), then crossed to the eastern coast and continued to move to the town of Lokachi, overtaking all its neighbors. Panzer divisions

were introduced into the 30-km "gap" that had formed: the 14th occupied Vladimir-Volynsky in the evening of June 23 and moved east in the early morning of June 24, with the task of occupying Lutsk and crossings on the river. Styr; The 13th Panzer Division was brought to the border much later, and at 17:00 on June 23, the crossing of its tanks across the Bug began, on the morning of June 24, the 13th TD was catching up with the infantry that had gone far ahead. [238] .

It was in such an environment that the command of the 5th Army was preparing a counterattack; Let us emphasize this important circumstance - not the occupation of a new line of defense by the forces of army reserves, but precisely a counterattack with the task of "defeating the enemy's Vladimir-Volyn grouping and restoring the situation on the state border . " **[43]** The plan of the operation was eminently beautiful and solid. The 135th rifle and 19th tank divisions, supported by powerful fire from an army artillery group (it included the 460th corps artillery regiment and divisional artillery of the 135th rifle division), attack the enemy "head on", along the highway, the 215th motorized the division strikes on the flank, from Verba to Vladimir-Volynsky, the 1st PTABR moves in the second echelon, ready to repel a counterattack by enemy tanks.

The starting line for going on the offensive was established along the line Voinitsa, Lokachi. It was there on the morning of June 24 that the 135th division met with the advanced units of the German 14th TD. By a happy coincidence, this line is very convenient for defense: there is a very unusual topography with a "cross" of four small rivers intersecting at Lokacha, so the front and flank of the defenders were covered by a natural "anti-tank ditch". All this, however, did not help, and the 135th Rifle Division rolled back to the east, into the forest near the village of Aleksandrovka (8 km southeast of Voinitsa). In combat report No. 06 of the headquarters of the 22nd mechanized corps, this is described as follows: ***"As a result of the attack of a small group of enemy tanks and the panic raised in connection with this in the rear of the 135 SD, the latter at 10.00 24.6.41 from the line of Voinitsa, Pavloviche, Lokachi withdrew to the line Holopeche, Col. Boilers. It was impossible to provide any assistance due to the untimely approach of the units [of the mechanized corps] ... "*** **[245]**

Where were the divisions of the 22nd mechanized corps? The 215th MD, whose tank regiment was armed with high-speed BTs, for some reason lagged far behind on the march and entered the Verba area only on the evening of June 24th. At 3.30 am on June 24, the 19th Panzer received an order (oral for some reason) to advance to the Voinitsa, Aleksandrovka area. **[237]** In a straight line from Kovel it is 55 km, but tanks in the forest do not go in a straight line. Making their way through forest roads, the division (most likely its advanced units) reached the highway by noon on June 24, and since the area assigned to it was already occupied by the enemy, crossed the road

and concentrated in the forest north of Cape Shelvuv. Further events are described in several documents, but from this they do not become more understandable. As one would expect, the simplest and shortest messages are found in German documents. At 17.15, the headquarters of the 14th Panzer Division sent a radiogram to the command of the corps: ***"From 16.15, a tank attack has been underway on the forest east of Aleksandrovka."*** Evening report in a little

new advance from Aleksandrovka at 17.00, the tank regiment managed to destroy 87 armored vehicles (Pz.Fahrzeuge) and 4 batteries. Own losses - 6 armored vehicles (Pz.Fahrzeuge). The tank regiment is currently replenishing ammunition and refueling. Reaching Torchin [today] is unlikely... [246] By the morning of June 25, the number of

destroyed Soviet tanks and guns

increases significantly:

"June 25... 6.40. A call from Colonel-General von Kleist (commander of the 1st TGr). **The corps commander reports the success of 14 TD in the battle on June 24: 8 batteries, 40 anti-tank guns, 158 enemy tanks were destroyed.** [238] The report of the headquarters of the 14th TD dated 23-00 June 26 says: **"The total number of tanks destroyed in the tank battle increased to 215."** [247] And this despite the fact that in addition to the 19th TD, only a tank regiment of the 131st Motorized Division (9 MK) appeared in that area, which had no more than 35 tanks in the Lutsk region; even if the Germans destroyed them all in one day (which directly contradicts the report of the regiment commander), then this assumption does not explain the transformation of the number 158 into 215. But this is not the limit - in the review of hostilities 3 TC quoted at the beginning of the chapter, it is said about 267 Soviet tanks destroyed in the battle near Aleksandrovka ... Of the available Soviet documents, the most "primary source", compiled

not even in hot pursuit, but directly during the event, should be recognized as the above-mentioned Combat Report No. 06 of the headquarters of the 22nd MK. In it, the tank battle is described as follows:

"At 14.00 on 24.6, after a short artillery preparation, units of the 37th and 38th TPs [19th Panzer Division] counterattacked from the forest north of Shelvuv in the direction of Aleksandrovka by 16.30 restored the position, forcing the enemy to retreat to the line of Voinitsa, cape Lokachi. By 17.00, as a result of a counterattack by heavy and medium enemy tanks, a fierce battle took place between enemy tanks and tanks of 22 MK. As a result, the remnants of the 37th and 38th TPs withdrew to the grove east of the stake. Sernichki (settlement south of the highway 25 km east of Voinitsa. - **M.S.) . Losses in personnel and materiel are being clarified."** The Combat Report No. 02 of the headquarters of

the 19th Panzer Division has also been preserved. It is not clear when it was written (the date of June 23 is indicated in the document, which is an obvious mistake). For the first time, specific figures appear in it (later repeated in hundreds of publications, including Vladimirsky's monograph) of the number of tanks that took part in the battle:

"... At 13.30, not yet finished concentrating, the division commander received an oral combat order from the commander of the 22nd MK to attack. The attack was launched

tanks united by the entire division under the command of the commander of the 37th tank regiment at 14.00 with the task of counterattacking the advancing enemy units on (hereinafter a long list of the smallest settlements in the Alexandrovka, Voinitsa area. - *M.S.*) . **45 went on the attack. T-26 and 12 BA-10. Everything was lost** (this phrase is crossed out in green pencil. - *M.S.*) . **Upon reaching the tanks of the area, the forest is southeast of the height. 228, 5. D. Khonevich, horizon 234, the enemy infantry began to retreat, and strong artillery and rifle-machine-gun fire was opened from the forest. This was followed by an attack of medium and heavy enemy tanks, a strong battle ensued between the tanks. The battle lasted 2.5 hours, and after the loss of more than half of our tanks** (highlighted by me. - *M.S.*) , **the retreat began. In this battle, the commander of the**

19th TD was seriously wounded. Parts retreated and occupied the defense area. [248] The report on the combat operations of the 19th Panzer Division, compiled at the end of July, almost verbatim repeats the content of report No. TP Lieutenant Colonel Bibik and commander of the 38th TP Lieutenant Colonel Samsonov; the next day, the head of artillery of the 19th TD, lieutenant colonel Vasilenko, went missing and the commander of the motorized rifle regiment of the division, lieutenant colonel Sokolin, was mortally wounded. **[249]**

To complete the picture, a fragment from the memoirs of Marshal Rokossovsky can also

be cited: "By the evening of June 25 , **the commander of the 19th Panzer Division, Major General Semenchenko, arrived on foot at the command post of our corps in the Klevan area** (100 km east of Voinitsa. - *MS*) . **in an upset state, with a bandaged right hand. He reported that his division was completely defeated ... Soon one of the commissars of the regiment of the same corps turned up here, reporting the death of General Kondrusev and that the corps was broken. The decadent tone and confusion of the divisional commander and commissar of the regiment forced me rather impressively to advise them**

to immediately stop ranting about the death of the corps ... " **[250]**

Formally and arithmetically, Rokossovsky was absolutely right: the loss of "more than half" of 45 tanks is not yet the defeat of a tank division (not to mention the entire 22nd mechanized corps as a whole). There were significantly more armored vehicles in the 19th TD; an "Explanatory note on the lost materiel" was attached to the report on its military operations (and in such documents the initial amount of materiel is at least not overestimated), from which it follows that by June 22, 1941, the division had 183 tanks (147 T-26 , 7 flamet

BA-10. [251] The artillery regiment of the division received a full set of guns (12 122-mm howitzers and 12 152-mm howitzers) and 28 STZ-5 tracked tractors for towing them (and this is not counting 10 heavy Voroshilovtsevs in tank regiments and 4 light "Komsomolets" in a motorized rifle regiment). With the theoretical presence of all this, a

description of the hostilities

division of the next day (June 25) takes only one paragraph in the report:

"The 19th motorized rifle regiment and howitzer artillery regiment took up defense along the eastern bank of the river. Chamois (it is not clear who

the division was going to defend against, turning to the forest in front, and back to the Germans marching along the highway to Lutsk. - *M.S.) . Division*

headquarters in Boguszówka. At 19.00, German tanks approached Lutsk, some of them headed for Antonovka, Bogushuvka, apparently with the aim of cutting off the escape routes for our units (another type of interaction with the enemy, except for withdrawal, is not even discussed. - *M.S.) . At this time, a*

verbal order was received through the communications delegate of the headquarters of the 22nd corps - to retreat in the direction of Rozhishche, to cross the river. Styr and concentrate in the area of Sikirichi (settlement near the road Lutsk,

In the further description of the combat operations of the division, 4 tanks appear only once, all the rest disappeared without a trace. What was it? It is unlikely that an accurate and documented answer to such a question will ever be found. As a

hypothesis, we can propose the following reconstruction of events. In the course of a long (2.5 days) march, over 250 km long, units of the division stretched out and were largely disorganized, as a result of which no more than half of the division's armored vehicles reached the Vojnitsa, Shelvuv area by noon on June 24. There was even less readiness to go into battle. The commanders decided to captivate their subordinates by personal example. The consolidated "officer battalion" consisting of 45 tanks, with the courage of despair, but without any interaction with the infantry and artillery, went on a frontal attack and was shot by 50-mm cannons of the German Pz-III's; the result, alas, is quite predictable, given what the 19th TD was armed with. After the loss of command personnel, the division rapidly fell apart, leaving armored vehicles in the forest and on the roads. As the German units advancing on Lutsk discovered more and more abandoned tanks, the corresponding figures grew in the reports of the 14th TD and 3rd TK of the Wehrmacht.

As for the participation in the counterattack of another division of the 22nd MK, the description of the hostilities (quotes would be appropriate here) of the 215th motorized division will take up very little space. The archive fund of the division is traditionally empty. In the case "Reports and reports of parts and

compounds 22 MK "(TsAMO. F. 3456. Inv. 1. D. 14) nothing was deposited from the 215th MD. In case 11 ("Combat reports of units"), however, there are two documents (Opersvodka No. 1 and combat report w / n) dated June 22, which reflect the process of the division's march from Rovno.

Noteworthy (as an illustration of the thesis about the "crushing blow of German aviation") is the description of the first bombing **raids : fire.**" On the next page, specific figures of losses also appear: **"From the bombardment of Rivne, 2 killed, 3 wounded, 2 shell-shocked."** [252] After that, the 215th MD went on a march to Kovel - and traces of it disappear from the documents.

In *Vladimirsky's monograph, the division's combat operations, from beginning to end*, are described as follows: **Colonel Barabanov at 4 o'clock on June 25 to attack the enemy after a 15-minute artillery raid.**

The fascist German command, having discovered the approach of units of the 215th MD from the northeast to Vladimir-Volynsky, hastily advances the 298th Infantry Division to meet it, which, having forestalled the 215th MD, at dawn on June 25, itself suddenly attacks it with strong artillery support and aviation, forcing them to first go on the defensive, and then retreat to the north, to the Turya River. These actions of the 215th motorized division ended the counterattack of the second echelons of the 5th

Strictly speaking, the intentions of the command of the 215th MD and the real actions of the enemy are described here. But let's not quibble over words, something else is more important - where did the tank regiment [96] go (and there were 129 BT tanks, that is, a little less than in the German tank divisions)? Even more strictly speaking, there should have even been two tank regiments, since the order of the commander of the 5th Army assumed joint actions of the 215th MD and the tank regiment of the 41st TD, transferred earlier (in fact - as part of two battalions) to reinforce 87th Infantry Division. I asked this question in the very first "Barrel and Hoops", but the answer was found in the documents of the Wehrmacht. All tanks were in place, even in excess, as evidenced by radio messages from the 298th Infantry Division:

"24.6.41. To the north of Vladimir-Volynsky, 5 tanks were destroyed, 4 more turned back, but are still nearby ... In the forests north of Verba, according to local residents, 200-300 tanks (highlighted by me. -

M.S.). So far, only 10 have seen their troops, of which 6 were destroyed, one was hit, and was evacuated.

25.6.41 General events of the day: First, the enemy attack from Verba, supported by tanks and artillery, is repulsed. In the morning, the offensive of one regiment to the north beyond Verba to the Turya River, the offensive of the second regiment to the northeast through Mogilno (settlement 8 km east of Verba. - M.S.), also to the section of the river. Turya. To the right, in the direction of Mogilno, there is no contact with the enemy, in the Verba area the enemy resistance is broken, the offensive continues, the exact location of the front line is currently unknown. [253]

It was tricky to find the "exact location", because after a short battle with a German infantry regiment, the 215th motorized division ended up in the area of the settlement. Sofiyivka. In those parts, this toponym is very common, but Vladimirsky twice reports that ***"the 215th motorized division concentrated in the Sofiyivka area (50 km east of Kovel)." On the military "dvukhverstka" in 1935, such a place is called Sofyanovka, you can get to it from Kovel only by tangled "goat paths"; a swift march from Verba through Kovel to Sofiyivka / Sofyanovka can be considered an outstanding achievement ...***

Concluding the review of the military operations of the 5th Army on the western approaches to Lutsk, it is worth noting the fact that there are no real traces of the 1st PTABR, the first in serial number and the only one that received a complete set of main weapons and artillery tractors before the start of the war (5 ° C -2 and 12 ° CTZ-5). **[254]** . The enemy, however, did not notice at all the presence of a powerful anti-tank formation armed with 76- and 85-mm cannons [97] that pierce the so-called. "heavy" German tanks through and through. And this is very strange, considering that in the first days of the war, Wehrmacht documents scrupulously (sometimes even with understandable exaggeration) record every fact of the appearance of something new in the armament and structure of the Red Army. Finally, and

most importantly, the participation in the battles of the 1st PTABR is not adequately reflected in the numbers of losses of German tanks - by the morning of July 3, that is, after many battles and campaigns, 15 tanks were irretrievably lost in the 14th tank division, another 28 are under renovation. **[276]** The last figure could only be traced back to the actions of the 1st PTABR, since after being hit by shells of this caliber, German tanks hardly needed repairs. **Bridge at**

Rozhishche

It took the 14th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht all day on June 25 to go 35 km from the battlefield near Aleksandrovka to Lutsk. The strange slowness suggests that one and a half hundred tanks were not just "found" by the Germans there; perhaps some units of the Soviet 19th Panzer Division fought a battle that the command of the division, the 22nd mechanized corps and the 5th Army never knew about (as the attentive reader remembers, something similar happened in the Lvov direction, on the evening of 24 June on the highway Krakovets, Yavorov). As for the second tank division (13th TD) of the German tank corps, on June 25 it advanced "on a march and with songs." A short phrase (***"motorized infantry brigade follows, sitting on cars"***) in the report of the division headquarters dated 14.00 on June 25 testifies to this quite eloquently. [255]

Having driven along country roads south of the main highway, the 13th TD at 6 pm on June 25 came to the southern suburbs of Lutsk and the bridge over the river. Styr. This time, the bridge was blown up immediately after the first three tanks of the division's reconnaissance battalion rumbled across it. [256] However, this circumstance slowed down the offensive of the 13th TD only for a few hours, by the morning of June 26 the city and the most important crossroads (south to Dubno and east to Rovno) were in the hands of the enemy. The remnants of the formations of the 5th Army retreated across the Styr River; in Vladimírsky's description, it happened like this: ***"The command of the 5th Army during the move to the new command post on the night of June 26 witnessed the disorderly withdrawal of units of the 135th rifle, 19th tank divisions and the 460th artillery regiment of the 27th rifle corps. A stream of people, carts, vehicles, guns raced along the highway to Rovno, and only the energetic intervention of the officers of the Army headquarters and General Potapov***

himself stopped this flight and prevented the further spread of panic. [43]

South of Lutsk, upstream of the river. Styr to the confluence of the river. Ikva, two Wehrmacht infantry divisions (299th and 111th) marched east, by the morning of June 26 they had already crossed Styr and actually overtook the tank formations of the 3rd TK. Further south, the 48th Tank Corps occupied Berestechko and Dubno. In such a situation, the German command decided to take advantage of the favorable situation on the southern flank of the 1st Tank Group and lead the 13th TD to Rovno, a long, but (as it seemed to them then) safe route through a fork in the road east of Mlynov. The 14th Panzer Division was ordered to advance east towards Rovno, with one marching group of the division to move directly along the highway, and the other along country roads 5–8 km south of

The order was given, but not executed, and on the maps of the German General Staff, the icon denoting the 14th TD "stuck" to Lutsk for two and a half days.

The non-stop offensive of the German tank division was stopped by units of the 131st motorized division (9th mechanized corps) and the motorcycle regiment of the 22nd mechanized corps. The documents of these units have been preserved, and their study allows us to "tweak up the sharpness" and see in detail the picture of how the Red Army fought - in those cases when it tried to fight.

The 131st motorized division began its formation in the late autumn of 1940 on the basis of the 131st rifle division. The division, like the entire 9th mechanized corps as a whole, was staffed much worse than the mighty mechanized corps (4 MK, 8 MK, 15 MK) of the first echelon of the Southwestern Front. At the same time, it is worth noting that in comparison with the tank divisions of the 9th Mechanized Corps, the 131st MD looked much better - the fact that it was formed on the basis of a full-blooded rifle division affected. In particular, the artillery regiment of the 131st MD was almost completely equipped with guns (8 76-mm cannons, 16 122-mm howitzers, 8 152-mm howitzers) and received 28 tractors (STZ-3 and STZ-5); in the anti-tank division there was a supernumerary set (37 pieces) of Komsomolets

tractors. [268] The tank regiment of the division (58 tank regiments) was still very "raw", with a staff strength of 258 BT-7 tanks, in reality there were 123 tanks, of which 40 needed medium repairs ("3rd category"), and two thirds of the relatively serviceable tanks were BT-5 of the 1934 issue. For the emerging tank units, and even in the mechanized corps of the second echelon, such a situation (equipping the combat training park with badly worn tanks) was not a wonder, surprisingly different - in the "Report on Combat the actions of the 58th Tank Regiment" the message of such meager weapons ends not with the traditional "Yaroslavna's cry", but with an uncompromising conclusion: ***"The regiment was quite combat-ready and ready to go into battle with the fascist gangs .***

" [258] The 131st motorized

division had to enter the battle with the fascist gangs earlier than other formations of the 9th MK; the commander of the 5th Army, Major General Potapov, ordered the division to be withdrawn from the mechanized corps and make a forced march to the line of the river. Styr near Lutsk. Perhaps this decision was made because the 131st MD (unlike the tank divisions of the 9th MK) was equipped with wheeled vehicles (29 cars, 429 trucks and 95 special vehicles) at least half of the regular strength and could make a forced march [98] . [268] The path was not short - from Novograd-Volynsky to Lutsk more than 160 km in a straight line. In terms of cover, the advance route of the 58th Panzer Regiment was drawn up

according to the same logic as in the case of the 19th Panzer Division -

deaf forest paths, away from the main highway. Insanity on the basis of "secrecy" has reached the point that through the river. The Goryn regiment did not cross the bridge, but on a village ferry to the Bashino metro station, while ***"the ferry could only carry one tank at a time, and the ferry itself was out of order and unprepared."*** We have to repeat once again: only the extremely small number of German aviation in the SWF zone made it possible to make such mistakes and not lose all the equipment on the march to the

battlefield ... A march 122 km long to Cape Bronniki (settlement near the highway, 14 km north -west of Rovno) took almost two days. ***"By 16.00, 35 tanks arrived in Bronniki, of which, on the basis of the order of the commander of the 131st motorized division, a consolidated battalion was formed in the amount of 14 tanks under the command of Captain Teremet and a reconnaissance company of 10 tanks under the command of Captain Rudenko."*** [258] . So in the text of the "Report". Let's assume that the number 35 is not a typo; in this case, it turns out

that "only" 48 out of 83 serviceable tanks lagged behind on the march.

"The general leadership of both groups, as well as one battalion of the 743th motorized regiment (131st md) , one battalion of the 135th rifle division and an artillery division was entrusted to the commander of the 58th tank regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Kanshin. The specified grouping was given the task of concentrating on the eastern outskirts of the mountains. Lutsk and prevent the enemy from crossing the river. Styr, holding the crossings in his hands until the approach of the main forces of the division. [258] And the last words, and the very fact of the inclusion of disparate units of another division in the consolidated combat group, indicate that in two days 450 vehicles were not able to transport the "main forces" (or at least half, one rifle regiment) 131- th md at a distance of 122 km. Let me remind you once

again that we are talking about one of the best, about a division that actually fought and stopped the German offensive for several days. ***"By 18.00 (June 25) on the southeastern outskirts of Lutsk, the accumulation of the enemy began, preparing for the crossing. By 20.00, under the cover of artillery and mortar fire, the enemy began crossing on the left flank of our defense. Despite the superior forces of the enemy, our units held him back until 15.00 on June 26. On this day in the battles under the mountains. Lutsk, our tanks took part in two attacks, inflicting serious defeats on the enemy, who lost more than a company of men, 8 motorcycles and on***
Among the individual units of the rifle units, operating in conjunction with the tanks, a panic retreat began. On this occasion

the commander of the 58th TP, Lieutenant Colonel Kanshin, told the military technician of the 1st rank Puchnin who arrived to him: "It is not so difficult to defeat the enemy as to overcome the

panic of our troops." [258] Military engineer Puchnin did not arrive alone; together with Lieutenant Loktev, they brought another 27 tanks of the regiment - the only case known to me when the tanks that lagged behind on the march did not evaporate in the air, but even with some

delay arrived at the battlefield. Judging by the Combat Report No. 010 of the headquarters of the 22nd MK, the day of June 27 began like this: **"According to oral information received from the head of artillery of the SME of the 131st MD, Captain Halperin, it is known: on the night of June 27, the 135th Rifle Division and the 87th Rifle Division** (by that time, we could only talk about scattered remnants of these formations. - *M.S.*) **in disorder retreated from the occupied line to the east, at 5.00 the 131st MD departed from the occupied line ... "** [259] Someone, however, continued to hold the 14th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht near Lutsk all day. Therefore, it makes sense to continue reading the "Combat Op

"Holding back the superior forces of the enemy, who had a plan to strike at the headquarters of the division, located in Sapoguv (a northeastern suburb of Lutsk. - *M.S.*) , **12 tanks under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Kanshin and Captain Teremet at 10.00** (June 27) **went into battle. In this battle, the enemy organized exceptionally strong anti-tank artillery fire, with great activity of motorized infantry, which, presumably, was no less than a regiment** (the estimate, again, is quite realistic. - *M.S.*) . **Having lost at least one and a half companies in killed and wounded, the enemy, unable to withstand heavy fire from our side, suspended the offensive and went over to temporary defense, accumulating his troops on the lines he held. In this battle, the death of heroes died: Lieutenant Colonel Kanshin, Art. Lieutenant Pavlovsky, Lieutenants Statin and Loktev, Jr. lieutenant Porokhnyaviy, junior command and rank and file - 4 people. Since that time, the command of the regiment was taken over by the chief of staff of the**

regiment, Major Legeza. On June 28, all the remaining tanks in the amount of 7 pieces, according to the order of the division commander, were used for reconnaissance and protection of the division headquarters ...

" [258] This short fragment

of the document is extremely informative. Once again, we see a desperate attempt by a courageous commander to captivate his subordinates by personal example - and the inevitable result of a clash between the heroism of singles and the Wehrmacht military machine. We see that this "machine" - at least in some cases - gave obvious failures, forcing us to recall the saying: "Well done among the sheep, but on the contrary

young man is a sheep himself. The firepower of the Wehrmacht tank division (and these are not only tank guns, but also a full-fledged anti-tank battalion) made it possible to shoot 12 light tanks without delaying and without going over to "temporary defense". Finally, we see the "strange arithmetic" traditional for the summer of 1941, in which the battalion turns into a company, fifty tanks turn into 12 units, the losses of commanders are numerically greater than the losses of privates ...

To the north of Lutsk there was another point suitable for crossing troops to the eastern bank of the river. Styr is a railway bridge near Rozhische. Of course, this was not the best option - primarily because from Rozhische to the main highway we had to go through a continuous swampy forest (or return along the eastern bank of the river to Lutsk). On the other hand, the railway bridge has a high carrying capacity, which is essential for tank crossings. The first attempt "from a raid, from

a turn" to capture the bridge near Rozhishche began at 6 am on June 24, when Schulze's "shock company" from the reconnaissance battalion of the 298th Infantry Division was sent to a distant raid with the task of "taking the bridge near Rozhishche, which is important for supplying **tanks**". [238] By evening, a group of German motorcyclists with mortars and anti-tank guns had reached the bridge. There they were met with a motorcycle regiment of the 22nd mechanized corps, prudently sent to Rozhische on June 23 by order of the commander of the 5th Army. The outcome of the meeting was:

"At 21.00 24.6 the enemy began artillery preparation and mortar fire until 22.00. Intelligence sent from the 1st company consisting of 6 people under the command of art. Sergeant Laptev, found: a cluster of motorcyclists with machine guns and pulling up an anti-tank gun to the railway bridge in order to cover the crossing. At 4.00 25.6 a group of enemy motorcyclists, up to 20 people, approached the railway bridge and, under the cover of mortar fire, tried to cross the railway bridge. The crossing failed. A group of motorcyclists was destroyed by fire from an easel machine gun of the 2nd

company. [260] The motorcycle regiment of the mechanized corps, even by its full strength (1417 people), could be considered a "regiment" only in name. In fact, by the beginning of the war, these units were a rifle battalion, and not reinforced, but weakened by the absence (small number) of heavy infantry weapons. In the vast majority of cases, neither the commanders of mechanized corps in their reports, nor post-war historians remember the existence of the MCP. But the 23rd MCP of the 22nd Mechanized Corps turned out to be very noticeable.

On the evening of June 25 to the river. Styr approached the 14th TD of the Wehrmacht, from which a "battle group" was sent to Rozhishche, consisting of one motorized infantry battalion and one howitzer division of the artillery regiment of the division; the Germans now had some advantage in manpower and overwhelming fire superiority. The result of the attempt to capture the bridge turned out to be

the same: ***"At 22.00 25.6 the enemy again tried to cross the railway bridge. Under the influence of artillery and mortar fire, the 2nd company was completely unable to repel a group of motorcyclists crossing the railway bridge. In support and to destroy the group that broke through the railway bridge, up to 100 people were thrown from the left flank of the 4th company under the command of ml. Lieutenant Andreikov. A counterattack and attack, fire of an anti-tank battery under the command of Lieutenant Raskov, a group of 100 people. most of the enemy were destroyed, and several people fled to the western bank of the river. Styr". [260]***

In the future, both sides increased their forces. The Germans transferred a reconnaissance battalion and a motorcycle battalion of the 14th Panzer Division to Rozhishche. The command of the 5th Army sent the remnants of the 19th Panzer Division to Rozhishche, which was able to assemble and advance two rifle battalions, 14 artillery regiment guns and 4 T-26 tanks to the bridge. [237] The Germans, however, claim that on June 26, in the battle near Rozhishche, ***"super-heavy Russian tanks were discovered for the first time."*** [257] This may be true, since the units of the Red Army fighting at Rozhishche inevitably became a "center of condensation", around which scattered units of other divisions gathered. According to the report of the 23rd MCP, ***"from June 24 to June 27, the enemy lost: up to 200 people were killed, 4 motorcycles, 2 anti-tank guns were destroyed and 2 people were taken prisoner. The regiment lost: 70 killed, 90 wounded. One car, 6 mortars were lost. [260]*** The Germans never succeeded in capturing the

crossing. On June 28, the German command finally realized that it was extremely unreasonable to "expend" a tank division for endless attacks on a fortified point; at 15.50, the advance detachment of the 298th Infantry Division approached Rozhische, and units of the 14th TD were able to move east, from Lutsk along the highway to Rivne. Late in the evening of June 28, the headquarters of the 298th Infantry Division reported: ***"Opposite the Rozhishche bridgehead, the enemy. Expansion of the bridgehead by attack from 17.00. We reached the Rudnya region. At present, the enemy's counterattack with tanks ... The task for the next day: the defense of the Rozhische bridgehead and th***

On June 29, after the 15th Rifle Corps left Kovel, the Germans sent reinforcements along the highway from Kovel to Rozhishche: motorized artillery with an advanced infantry detachment of the 17th Army Corps. In the evening of the same day, the 648th rifle regiment from the 200th rifle division of the second echelon of the South-Western Front approached Rozhishche. **[260]** June 30, July 1 ... The city of Rovno was already occupied, crossings on the river were captured. Goryn near Gosha and Ostrog, in the strip of the neighboring Western Front, the Germans occupied Minsk and Bobruisk (400 km east of the border), and the battle at Rozhishche still did not subside. Strictly speaking, the Germans were never able to pass through this ill-fated bridge in battle, they got it after, as part of the general withdrawal of the troops of the 5th Army to the line of the "old border", the units that fought near Rozhishche retreated to the east, into the forests between the rivers Styr and Goryn.

The largest division Yes,

exactly this (in terms of the number of tanks) was the 41st Panzer Division of the 22nd Mechanized Corps. By the time the war began, it was armed with more than 400 tanks (it is impossible to give an exact figure, but the smallest of those found in the documents is 414 units), including 376 serviceable tanks of the "1st and 2nd category". This is significantly more than it was in all 3 Wehrmacht shopping malls. The basis of the tank park of the 41st TD was made up of light T-26s, but the division also managed to get tanks of new types - armored monsters KV-2, armed with a 152-mm howitzer, in the amount of 31 pcs. The division was formed on the basis

of the 36th and 38th tank brigades - one of the oldest in the Red Army (formed respectively in 1932 and 1935). Both brigades took part in the invasion of Poland in September 1939 and then quite successfully covered more than 250 km; The 36th brigade crossed the river. Bug, occupied the city of Helm, crossed the river. Vepsh, occupied the settlement Piaski and Piotrkow did not even reach Lublin. Now, in the summer of 1941, the tankmen of the 41st TD were about to make a second attempt... A brief summary of the "combat actions" of the largest

tank division was summed up in a document signed on July 11, 1941 by the Military Council of the 5th Army. It is quite difficult to determine the status of a document - either an order (but orders are not made that way), or a sentence, or an appeal:

"To the commander and deputy for political affairs of the 41st Panzer Division Copy: To the

commander of the 22nd MK For the entire time of the fighting, you and your division did almost nothing tangible on any sector of the Army front. Not only that, you, as a carefree commander, criminally, moreover, without a fight, lost 31 expensive KV tanks. The commander, responsible for his own business, would never have allowed this, moreover, the conditions for your withdrawal were

exceptionally favorable. You retreated without a fight, and the enemy did not hang over your shoulders. Nevertheless, you managed to scatter the tanks entrusted to you even under these conditions. In addition, when you reported to the Military Council of the Army, you did not report the actual state of the division and deceived the Military Council.

When your division advanced on Cape Olyka on July 2, 41, you behaved extremely unsightly and, moreover, cowardly. As a result, we lost the material part you had..." [262]

Unlike many other, defeated and / or disappeared tank divisions, the 41st left behind a significant number of documents, including a multi-page report "Results of the fighting of 41 TD from 22.6 to 22.7.41", compiled and signed by the already new command staff ; the reports signed by Colonel Pavlov (the former, "original" division commander) have also been preserved. The study of documents makes it possible to clarify and concretize the assessment of the use of the division, which was given by the Military Council of the 5th Army.

We note right away that, in fairness, the commander of the 15th Rifle Corps, Fedyuninsky, should have shared responsibility for the collapse of the division along with Pavlov; in fact, Pavlov is only to blame for allowing the excessively active commander to "cut into pieces" a tank division. There is nothing unique in this story itself, in the summer of 1941 this happened more than once and on many fronts, but one cannot but admit that Fedyuninsky surpassed everyone. The precocious colonel, who was appointed corps commander under Zhukov's patronage, saw in the tank division transferred to his operational subordination not a complex tool for solving a very specific list of tasks, but a "bag of tanks". This "bag" was used on the verge between tragedy and farce:

"At 17.25 22.6 Shtarm's order* (so in the text of the document, but it's hard to believe that managerial cretinism has reached the point that the Army headquarters commanded companies. - ***M.S.) allocated a company in the amount of 15 T-26 tanks to the Dubov area (northern suburb Kovel. - ***M.S.) to eliminate the landing*** (which, of course, was**

not. - ***M.S.) ... Orally, by order of Shtarm, through the commander of the 15th SC, a company of T-26 tanks was appointed in the district of Macyuv*** (n.p. on the road Kovel, Lyuboml.

- ***M.S.) for reconnaissance of the Kryluv direction ... 23.00 23.6. By oral order of the commander of the 15th SC, through the communications delegate, Captain Ktitarenko, a company of tanks was appointed to fight 8 aircraft (???) that landed in the Novoselki region. Having traveled all night, Captain Kulako***

At 10.00 24.6. by personal order of the commander of the 15th SC, a company of tanks is attached to the commander of the 45th division ... At 16.00 24.6. the communications delegate, Captain Ktitarenko, transmitted by telephone: "To appoint by order of the commander of the 15th SC 30 T-26 tanks in addition to the previously issued 20 tanks (probably this is about the company mentioned above. - *M.S.*) **and transfer**

to the command of the commander of the 45th division ... 26.6 company T-26 tanks were sent to Lublinets (settlement 8 km southwest of Kovel. - *M.S.*) **to cover the Vladimir-Volyn direction ...**

27.6. by oral order of the commander of the 15th SC through the communications delegate, Major Starodubtsev, a company of T-26 tanks was allocated to cover the headquarters of the corps in the Kovel region and an additional company of T-26 tanks 82 tp, a company of T-26 81 tp in the Cherkasy district and company 82 tp in the Dubov district to

cover the withdrawal of 15 SC from Kovel ... " [263] Such operational art, along with the obvious crushing of a powerful "armored ram" into small disparate "shots", had two other, no less disastrous, consequences. Firstly, any tank of that era (German, English, Soviet) was difficult to maintain, low resource, unreliable device. With sin in half, but in the conditions of a large formation (tank division, mechanized corps), it was possible to provide technically competent maintenance and current repairs of tanks; transferred to the rifle division, where half of the personnel had never even seen a bicycle, the tanks were actually abandoned to chance; the first minor breakdown (real, imaginary or intentional) became the last. Secondly, the general demoralization of the Red Army from the very first hours of the war reached such a level that only continuous, strict control by a strong-willed commander became a necessary (but by no means always sufficient!) Condition

for the fulfillment of a combat mission. In such an army, scattering tanks by separate companies in different directions was tantamount to defeating a division - without a fight and before a fight.

Of course, the higher authorities did not forget about the presence of a motorized rifle regiment in the tank division. In the combat report of the commander of the 41st TD dated June 28, we read: **"The SME, by order of the Army, was subordinated from 22.6 to the commander of the 45th RD, where he was defeated in a battalion; there are heavy losses in the battalions, there is no command and headquarters of the**

regiment, the regiment does not exist. [264] The fate of the two tank battalions, which on June 22 were transferred to the command of the commander of the 87th Rifle Division, is not entirely c

already noted above, the German documents recorded the repeated participation of Soviet tanks in the battles near Vladimir-Volynsky. On the other hand, nothing resembling two tank battalions (and this is a hundred tanks) is found neither in the description of the battle, nor even in the list of declared enemy victories. In the combat report of the 298th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht, compiled at 15.20 on June 25 (i.e., after the encirclement and defeat of the 87th Rifle Division near Vladimir-Volynsky), the following figures are given: "To date, 37 armored vehicles of various sizes have been destroyed , **some burned down.**" [265] Armored vehicles of "different sizes" are not just tanks at all; The 87th Infantry Division also had its own armored vehicles, including a supernumerary abundance (52 pieces) of Komsomolets armored tracked tractors. [266] Finally, it is possible that the combat report of 15.20 already took into account the tanks of the 215th MD, knocked out in the morning battle near Verba. After a huge crowd of tanks of the 41st TD in inaction (or in convulsive movements) spent five days near Kovel, a retreat to the east

began. The report "Results of the fighting 41 TD" describes it quite eloquently:

"On June 27, at 15.00, the commander of the 81st tank regiment reported that his security reconnaissance in the direction of Melnitsa (settlement 12 km south of Povursk. - M.S.) by questioning the units departing from Povursk to Kovel (i.e., collecting panic rumors. - M.S.) established that Povursk was occupied by the enemy (this meant that the Germans allegedly bypassed the city and already 30 km east of Kovel. - M.S.) . The chief of staff of the sapper battalion of the 15th SC, having appeared at the command post, reported that he had blown up the bridges to Kovel, there was no one in Kovel. There was no communication with 15 SC. Major Starodubtsev, a delegate of the 41st TD, returned, but did not find the corps headquarters.

Knowing that the line of the subsequent withdrawal of the 15th SC is the Stohod River, the commander of the 41st TD, Colonel Pavlov, decided to attack the 81st TP [in the direction] Voloshki, Povursk, 82nd TP - Voloshki, Melnitsa with the task of freeing the crossings on the river. Stokhod. The chief of staff of the 41st TD sent reconnaissance to Melnitsa, Povursk. At 16.30, Colonel Pavlov decided, without waiting for the results of reconnaissance, to speak to the indicated area, without having the sanction of the commander of the 15th SC. As a result, the enemy was neither in Povursk nor in the Mill, the attack was in vain. All night on June 28, the headquarters collected the remaining vehicles along the fields and roads ("remaining" after what? - M.S.), and only by morning did they manage to establish the location of the units.

On June 28 at 15.00, by order of the commander of the 15th SC, the division withdrew to the Vistula, Sofyanovka area, claim. Yablonovka (this is already behind Stokhod, 10–15 km northwest of Kolka. - M.S.) , ur. Taras; GAP concentrated in the area

high 170, 3, having the task of choosing firing positions in this area in order to cover the withdrawal of units of the 15th SC, retreating to the eastern bank of Stokhid. On June 28 at 20.00 (a day after the division left. - *M.S.*), **the enemy captured Kovel and continues the offensive in the direction of Povursk ... " [263]**

For two days the 41st Panzer Division (more correctly, what was left of it) stood in the forest east of the river. Stokhod, after which, on the morning of June 30, she set out on a march to the Olyka, Klevan area. Having concentrated in the indicated area, the division went on the offensive at noon on July 1, with the task of reaching the Mlynov-Dubno region and cutting the Dubno-Rovno highway (see, incl., Fig. 9). As Vladimirsky writes, by the time this first, only and last active action of the 41st TD began, the division still had 106 T-26 tanks and 16 heavy KV-2 tanks. Not so little, none of the tank divisions of the 1st TGr of the Wehrmacht had such a number of serviceable tanks on that day. And it seems that not all of the personnel disappeared during the "forest march" - in the combat report of the division commander of June 28 mentioned above, we read: "**Losses in personnel are about 15% without** [taking into account]

a motorized rifle regiment . " **[264]** The description of this offensive in the report of the division command consists of three-quarters of toponyms - the names of small and smallest towns, farms and streams. Translated from Russian into Russian, they mean the following. On the first day, the 82nd Tank Regiment marched 4-5 km to the south, crossed the Putilovka River with one battalion, where it engaged in battle with enemy infantry, the number of which was determined to be one battalion. As a result of the battle, "**destroyed 3 anti-tank guns, 20 people. infantry, and the rest were driven back in a south-westerly direction. Due to the onset of darkness and the absence of infantry, 82 TP was forced to retreat to its original position. Losses: 5 T-26 tanks, 2 KV tanks collapsed on bridges and 1 KV tank damaged and blown up. 2 killed, 6 injured.** For 8 irretrievably lost tanks, 8 were killed and wounded. The second tank regiment of the division (81st tank regiment), "**moving in the second echelon for 82 tanks, approached at 21.30, turned around** [in battle formation] , **but the enemy retreated. Caught in the dark, the regiment concentrated in the forest south of**

Nosovichi (i.e., retreated back to the northern bank of the Putilovka River. - *M.S.*). On the morning of the second day of the offensive (July 2), the 81st TP advanced significantly to the south and was already 8 km from the Mlynov-Rovno highway. The Germans defended the approaches to the highway, and when leaving the forest, the tank regiment met with the enemy. "**The battle went from 6.00 to 11.00. As a result, the enemy was thrown back to the east, 17 motor**

T-26 tank, 2 armored vehicles, 9 killed, 21 wounded. [263] Among those killed was the commander of a tank battalion, Captain Chernyavsky.

This crushing counterattack ended. Already at 7 am, the headquarters of the 22nd mechanized corps received an order from the commander of the 5th Army about a general withdrawal of 200 km beyond the line of the old border to the city of Korosten. **"With the receipt of the order, the divisions began a systematic withdrawal from 11-11.30"**. True, from what is written further in the Combat Report No. 019 of the headquarters of the 22nd MK, it is clear that the withdrawal was not very systematic: **"Parts of divisions, scattered by intense bombing of enemy aircraft, groups of vehicles and small columns of footmen began to enter the assembly area. Separate groups of vehicles and foot units of 9 MK, 27 SK, 31 SK are moving along the withdrawal route of the corps. From east to west along the same route and at the same time there is a large unorganized movement of mobilized second echelons ..."** [263]

On July 6–7, units of the 41st Panzer Division, having traveled more than 200 km across the impassability of the Ukrainian Polissya, reached the area of Bovsunny, Tesnovka (20 km northwest of the city of Korosten). **"As a result of continuous long marches, by 24.00 on 7.7.41, the division had 27 T-26 tanks, 4 armored vehicles, and two KV tanks on the march."** In the combat report No. 025 of the headquarters of the 22 MK dated 19.00 on July 7, there is an interesting clarification to this information: **"Parts of the 41 TD arrived in the following composition: 81 TP - 10 tanks, 240 people and all transport vehicles; 82 TP - 9 tanks and all transport vehicles. [278]** It is impossible not to rejoice at the survivability of Soviet trucks ...

Exactly two days have passed, and half of this insignificant remnant of tanks quietly dissolves in the forest fog: **"At 20.00 on 9.7. Baranovka, Col. Sinyavka, with only 10 tanks. [263]** At this point, the history of the 41st TD as a large tank formation finally ended.

It is not possible to document the circumstances of the failure of each of the approximately 320 lost T-26 tanks, which were considered serviceable and combat-ready (!), on the eve of the war. Two battalions (approximately 100 tanks) disappeared in the Vladimir-Volynsky region, it is possible that two dozen of them were shot down in battle. As for the main forces of the division, in a multi-page report on its combat operations, summing up all the specific references to combat losses, one can count 12 wrecked T-26 tanks (3 in the area of Lyubomir and 9 during the offensive from Olyk to Mlynov). You can add 3 more T-26 tanks to this, which burned down during the withdrawal through Olyk (possibly from enemy bombing). In any case, at any stretch, we have to state that 90% of the tanks

tanks of the 41st TD were lost without the influence of the enemy (if you do not include the very fact of the outbreak of war in the category of "enemy influence"). Of course,

these were technically obsolete, weak tanks, the armor of which was pierced by any anti-tank gun. And the mighty giants of the KV-2 with indestructible armor - were they better used? The first mention of the use of KV tanks in battle is found in the very first paragraph of the report on the combat operations of the division : **forest Pivnik during the period of mobilization. Of**

the lost tanks, 2 KV tanks remained behind enemy lines, fighting heroically, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy, firing only machine-gun fire, since there were not a single shell.

So, two tanks fought, but the 52-ton bulks were used as a machine-gun tankette. The phrase about the "lack of shells" is suitable only for the tribunal. The KV-2 tank was armed with a 152 mm howitzer; this is one of the most common artillery systems in the Red Army (the division of such howitzers was in each rifle, motorized and tank division), shots for them were accumulated 2.63 million, or an average of 690 units. for one stem. This is all over the Red Army, and 773 shots per barrel were concentrated directly in the western border districts (not counting shots for the 152 mm howitzer cannon). [3] And this abundance was not enough to equip the newest tanks (no matter how huge the KV-2 turret may look from the outside, more than 36 shots simply did not fit in the tank). After the division moved to the Kovel area, **"all KV tanks of the 81st and 82nd tank**

regiments were thrown into the Dubov area to block the Brest-Litovsk direction." There they stood idle, waiting for the mythical enemy tank column. The next mention of KV tanks in the report refers to the moment the division left Kovel: **"During the withdrawal of units of the 15th SC, by order of the head of the garrison, 5 KV tanks were blown up."** Again, it is difficult to understand the meaning of this phrase without a tribunal. Firstly, why on earth is the head of the garrison in command of a tank division? Secondly, why is it necessary to blow up heavy tanks? Even if, for technical reasons, they became incapable of a joint march with the division, then five KVs buried in the ground are a "stronghold" of the defense, which the German infantry can break through without involving aviation or heavy artillery

I could not.

Three KV tanks were left in the Vladimir-Volynsky area, five were blown up in Kovel. How much should be left of 31 cars? "Correct"

the answer is 16. Vladimírsky calls this figure for the presence of KV tanks in the 41st TD as of July 1 (nothing is said at all in the report of the division command). During the attack on Mlynov, **"2 KV tanks collapsed on bridges and 1 KV tank was damaged and blown up."** Two more faulty (why?) KV tanks were blown up

by the crews during the withdrawal from Olyk. The mysterious fate of another armored monster is described as follows: **"With great difficulty, units managed to break through the burning town (Olyka) , where 3 T-26 tanks and one KV tank were lost, which, trying to break through the ring of fire, was ignited and exploded."** [263] It is difficult to understand how a diesel (!) tank could catch fire from the flames of burning wooden houses, but let's not nitpick. The main thing is different - 6 tanks out of 16 were lost "by name", but only two are crawling towards Korosten (**"two KV tanks on the march"**). Only one tank could supposedly be hit by the enemy (**"1 KV tank damaged and blown up"**). This is how this division fought: light tanks were too light, heavy tanks were too heavy and fell indomitably on bridges. There is not the slightest doubt that if four hundred

tanks of the 41st TD had been buried in the ground from the very beginning near the Ustilug, Vladimir Volynsky highway, the Germans would have had a little more problems. **The last two mechanized corps** Nominally, the Kiev OVO (South-Western Front) included eight mechanized corps. One of them (24 MK) was in the very initial stage of formation, and cannot be attributed to the category of armored formations

worth mentioning. Another, the

16th mechanized corps, in the very first days of the war, was transferred to the Southern Front, then was nominally transferred to the Western Front, but in the process of redeployment ended up in the epicenter of the battle near Berdichev; it was in July, and one can only call the battles near Berdichev (320 km to the nearest point of the border) a "border battle" as a very gloomy joke. There remain six mechanized corps that actually took part in the June battles on the Southwestern Front. About the fighting (i.e., defeat) 4 MK, 8 MK, 15 MK, 22 MK has already been said above. It remains to consider the short history of the last two (9th and 19th).

The 19th mechanized corps belonged to the list of "reduced 1st stage" and according to the plans of the General Staff of the spacecraft, even by the end of 1941, it should have received less than a third of the regular number of tanks; equipment with other types of materiel was carried out in approximately the same proportion. The 9th mechanized corps was formally included in the category of "combat", but in fact, by the time the war began, it was equipped with military and auxiliary equipment even worse than the 19th. Both corps

deployed in the depths of the district: 9th MK in the area of Novograd-Volynsky, Shepetovka, 19th mechanized corps - even further from the border, in the area of Zhytomyr, Berdichev. In the very first days of

the war, both mechanized corps "lost" their motorized division: by order of the commander of the 5th Army, the 131st MD was withdrawn from the 9th MK and advanced to the Styr River north of Lutsk (which was discussed in detail in the previous paragraph), the 213th the motorized division of the 19th MK, being "motorized" rather by name, lagged behind on the march to the front and ultimately entered the battle near Shepetovka as part of the "Lukin group", that is, the group of troops of the 16th Army of the Second Strategic Echelon of the spacecraft. As a result, both the 9th and 19th mechanized corps turned into "battle groups" of improvised composition: two understaffed tank divisions and small corps

parts.

As you know, the same glass can be called "half full" or "half empty" - it all depends on the angle of view and the mood of the observer. Of course, 9 MK and 19 MK were not full-fledged mechanized corps, and it would be absurd to expect that they would be able to do what the "three heroes" (4 MK, 8 MK, 15 MK) did not do, who received hundreds of "new types" tanks. On the other hand, carefully summing up the available composition of men, tanks and guns, we will see that the "battle groups" of the 9th and 19th mechanized corps in their composition approximately corresponded to the German tank division (see Table), and the German tank division was capable of for a lot.

	20 тд	35 тд	40 тд	43 тд	нем. тд
л/с, тыс. чел.	10,5	10,5	7,3	8,4	16
танки	36	102	16	246	150
гаубицы 122-мм	12	6	8	12	24 (105-мм)
гаубицы 152-мм	12	4	4	12	12
а/м	244	188	157	640	

Table 9

Notes: - the

number of personnel (except for the 43rd TD) is indicated as two thirds of the actual number of personnel in the mechanized corps; - for the 43rd

TD, only serviceable tanks of the 1st and 2nd categories are indicated; - for the 40th

TD, 180 machine gun tankettes T-27, T-37, T-38 were not taken into account; - in the

August report of the command of the 43rd TD, it is stated that 152-

there were only 4 mm howitzers.

The 43rd Panzer Division of the 19th Mechanized Corps was much better equipped than the others. The division was created on the basis of the 35th Red Banner Tank Brigade of the Leningrad Military District, which took part in the "winter war" [99]. In the report on the hostilities of the 43rd TD we read: ***"The senior and middle commanding staff were also prepared quite satisfactorily, most had combat experience in the war with Finland. The division was staffed with specialists both in quantity and quality quite satisfactorily, the crews of combat vehicles were trained, many of them had combat experience and fully mastered the equipment available."*** [270] Strictly speaking, the very fact that the report does not contain the traditional "lament

of Yaroslavna" speaks volumes. By June 1, the 43rd Panzer Division managed to receive 5 KV tanks, and then, during June, several T-34 tanks (different documents indicate figures of 2 or 9 units); all the rest were T-26 light tanks. In the list of the division's materiel, an unusually large (for an emerging division) number of gas tanks (67 units) and 9 5-AK radios on an automobile chassis attract attention. [271] .

The 40th Panzer Division of the 19th MK was still completely "raw". A unique feature of this division was its equipping with T-37/T-38 amphibious tankettes, which were supposed to be used as a line tank. Of course, a light tankette with thin bulletproof armor could not fulfill the tasks of a tank with the saturation of anti-tank weapons that the German infantry or tank divisions possessed; in accordance with the approach adopted in this book, these "tanks" are not included in the general list at all. On the other hand, one should not completely forget about their existence, since these "self-propelled machine guns", covered with at least some kind of armor, undoubtedly could shoot at enemy infantry, and much more actively than a conventional heavy machine gun, the calculation of which is protected only a gymnast. The 9th mechanized corps is famous mainly for the fact

that on the eve of the war it was commanded by the future marshal, twice Hero of the Soviet Union Rokossovsky, and the 20th corps was also commanded by the future marshal and twice Hero Katukov [100]. Everything else was traditional for the emerging tank formations: lack of equipment for all types of materiel, arming tank regiments with obsolete vehicles with great physical wear and tear; So, in the 20th TD, out of an insignificant number of tanks (36 units), 30 were BT-5s of the 1934 release, in the 35th TD there were 40 twin-turret machine-gun T-26s of the very first production series (they are not taken into account in Table 10) .

In the afternoon of June 22, parts of the 9th and 19th mechanized corps began to advance to the west. Despite the fact that the 19th MK was stationed 80–100 km east of the 9th MK, it was about a day ahead of it and entered the area of Rovno on the morning of June 25, once again demonstrating the high marching capabilities of the Soviet mechanized troops (150–200 km in 2–5 days - the result is very worthy). As Vladimirovsky writes, **“the commander of the [19th] corps organized the march, strictly in accordance with the real state of armored vehicles and the availability of vehicles. Before going on a campaign, each tank division of the 19th mechanized corps was divided into two echelons - mobile and foot. The mobile echelons of the tank divisions included all serviceable tanks, consolidated into tank regiments (one consolidated tank regiment per division), as well as the personnel of the motorized rifle regiment and special forces of the divisions, which could be transported by cash vehicles. [43]** Combat order No. 002, issued by

the commander of the 19th MK, Major General Feklenko, at 20:00 on June 23 (the evening of the second day of the war), begins with a completely enchanting phrase: **“ Information about the enemy is from government reports.” [272]** This is cooler than the proverbial “planned operations on the globe”; the school globe, at least, contains correct information about the location of the seas and continents ... Unfortunately, this quality of command and control did not change in the following days: **“For the entire time of the march, up to 26.6.41, no information from the highest headquarters about the headquarters [43rd TD] of the division did not have a position on the front ... There was a wide variety of conflicting information about the enemy ... It was known that the 36th rifle corps was operating to the left, but the exact area of its operations was not known, the search for the headquarters of the 36th the rifle corps did not lead to anything. [270]** Here it remains only to remind once again that communication is ensured not by the presence of technical means (horn, tom-tom, radio station, satellite phone), but by the presence of subjects wishing to exchange

information. The aforementioned order No. 002 set the task of the corps divisions reaching the initial concentration area along the line of the Stubla River in the Klevan, Varkovitsa sector (see incl., Fig. 9). In fact, only the 40th TD reached this line by the morning of June 25, and the 43rd TD “slowed down” east of Rovno, **“the further advance to the concentration area by the commander of the 19th MK was delayed for a day due to the unclear situation and the need to pull up units.” [270]** In the future, the discrepancy between the actions of the 40th and 43rd divisions in time and place only increased, which

disastrous consequences - especially given the weakness and small size of each of these "battle groups". The divisions of the 40th TD itself also acted at different times and in different directions. The

tank company was the first to enter the battle, which on the evening of June 24 (this is not a typo) reached the crossings across the river. Ikva near Mlynov, where, together with units of the 228th Infantry Division [101], during the day, until the evening of 25.6, it repelled attempts by advanced units of the 111th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht to cross to the eastern coast. In this company under the command of Art. Lieutenant Ivashkovsky, everything that could be called the word "tanks" as part of the 40th TD was reduced. During the day of a fierce battle with the German infantry, almost all of them were lost: ***"By the end of the day on June 25, the tank company lost 11 T-26 tanks, 2 T-28 tanks, having 3 T-26 tanks in need of repair ... During the period of action, the tank company the company destroyed up to an infantry battalion, 3 heavy machine guns, 4***

light machine guns and a mortar. [273] On the morning of June 26, the combined tank regiment of the 40th TD approached the Mlynov area, at the same time, the main forces of the German 111th Infantry Division approached the Ikva River. ***"At 12.00 on June 26, the enemy opened heavy fire from all types of weapons, under which the units of the 228th Rifle Division faltered and began to retreat in disarray, and only through the heroic efforts of the commanders of the headquarters of the 40th Tank Division was the position of the units of the 228th Rifle Division restored."*** [273] One could regard these phrases as, alas, a fairly typical desire to "shift the blame onto allies", but the 228th Rifle Division's own report on the hostilities describes this episode quite eloquently: "The 767th Rifle Regiment, pursued by enemy ***infantry with the support of artillery and mortars from the front and due to the appearance of up to a battalion of infantry with artillery and mortars in its rear, I was forced to begin a retreat into the forest southeast of Radov*** (settlement 20 km

The consolidated tank regiment of the 40th TD fought at Mlynov until the evening of June 26th. There is no explanation in the report - what this regiment was armed with, whether the T-27, T-37, T-38 wedges were used in battle (and there was nothing left in the division other than three T-26s). The report contains a rather vague phrase: "The regiment, with the support of 3 tanks, repeatedly suspended the enemy . " It all ended with the fact that ***"there was no connection with the neighbors on the right and left, thanks to which the enemy had the opportunity to bypass the flanks, and the regiment was surrounded. The regiment as a result of the battle lost up to 100 people killed, wounded***

without a trace". [273] About the loss of military equipment (in particular, tanks)

nothing is said.

At the same time, on the afternoon of June 26, the motorized rifle regiment of the 40th TD reached the Ikva River on the 16-km front from Targovitsa to Adamovka (at least, this is what the division's report on combat operations says). A rifle regiment (and not even a full complement) could neither defend nor, all the more so, attack on a front of 16 km; what was the meaning of his actions, isolated from other parts of the 19th mechanized corps, is difficult to understand. Only the result is clear: **"As a result of the battle, I lost up to 1200 people killed, wounded and missing, defeated up to two enemy infantry battalions. According to the order of the commander of the 19th MK with battles, gaining a foothold on separate lines, under the command of the captain** (highlighted by me. - **M.S.) Bondar retreated to the Yasenevichi line** (settlement 11 km west of Rovno. - **M.S.)**". At this, the participation of the 40th TD in the counterattack

of the mechanized corps ended, the scattered remnants of the division's units by the evening of June 27 retreated to the area of Rivne. The only result of the actions of the division was the suspension of the march of the 111th infantry division of the Wehrmacht for one or two days, as a result of which the 111th infantry division was able to approach Dubno only on the morning of June 28; if the "Popel group" (and the entire 8th MK as a whole) had acted more energetically, such a delay would have cost the Germans the loss of Dubno, but in reality everything ended for them with a "light fright". The main strike force of the 19th Mechanized

Corps, the 43rd Panzer Division, operated in the main direction, with the task of advancing on Dubno. As noted above, on the morning of June 25, the mobile echelon of the division went to the area east of Rovno (Taikury, Goshcha) and during the day of June 25 pulled up the lagging units. In the report on the combat operations of the division, the composition of the "mobile echelon" is named quite specifically: four tank battalions, reduced to one tank regiment before the battle, and two battalions of a motorized rifle regiment; judging by the further description of the battle, in the area of \u200b\u200bn.p. Taykury (13 km south-east of Rovno) and the artillery regiment of the division (possibly incomplete). These forces were used as follows: **"At 4 o'clock [June 25], the following combat order was received from the**

headquarters of the 19th mechanized corps: "Immediately throw two motorized rifle battalions into Dubno and clear Dubno of enemy units, take the crossing [across the river. Ikva] and firmly hold it until the approach of tanks, then, with the approach of tanks, defeat the enemy in the Dubno area. At 0600, a motorized rifle detachment (two battalions) of the 43rd Motorized Rifle Regiment under the command of Major Ivanchenko, with a platoon of tanks and a battery of regimental artillery, set out to carry out the specified task ... "[270]

Despite the fact that **"the headquarters of the division did not have any data on the enemy and the actions of our units on the front"**, and most likely did not have "any data" and the headquarters of the 19th MK, the circumstances were such that the decision to immediately attack Dubno was theoretically the most successful. There were no Germans in Dubno yet, and there was an opportunity to occupy the city with "little bloodshed". Theoretically, the task was also facilitated by the presence in the Dubno area (near Pohorelets, Mlodava) of units of the 228th Infantry Division (reconnaissance battalion of the division, 799th Infantry and 669th Artillery Regiments); if you believe the report on the division's combat operations, **"a separate reconnaissance battalion broke into the center of Dubno, where a battle ensued."** [225]

However, on June 25, no interaction was observed between the motorized riflemen of the 43rd TD and the infantry of the 228th Rifle Division; the time from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. (2 p.m.) was spent driving 30-40 km in cars, "concentrating in the forest area southwest of Mlodav" and at 20-00 watching how the **"795th"** (so in the text, but in meaning it should be the 799th) **rifle regiment of the 228th rifle division, breaking away from the division and the 36th rifle corps, operating to the left, retreats in disorder in an easterly direction.** [270] Alas, the German 11th Panzer Division used the day of 25 June with much better results; in ZhBD 48 TK of the Wehrmacht we read:

"The 11th TD with its 110th motorized infantry regiment, overcoming the weak resistance of the enemy, **continued the offensive during the night** [from June 24 to 25] . **Around 07.30, the advanced units of the division reached the area south of Dubno. Due to the poor condition of the road network, the tank regiment of the division got stuck in the Ostrow area** (35 km west of Dubno. - M.S.) . **The reconnaissance battalion of the division made its way through the forest area near the town of Mlynov and approached Dubno from the north side.**

From 11.00 the 110th MRP storms Dubno from the south side. There are many enemy units in Dubno. At the same time, the reconnaissance battalion is trying to break through from the north. The attack proceeds successfully, the enemy's flank counterattacks are repulsed. At 14.10 Dubno was taken. [188]

Having missed a favorable moment, **"the 43rd motorized rifle regiment went on the offensive by the end of the day, but, having met organized machine-gun and mortar fire from the Pogorelets area, detaining some of the retreating soldiers of the 795th rifle regiment, went on the defensive until the morning of**

26.6.41" . [270] Then came the eventful day of 26 June. Early in the morning, the 11th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht set out from Dubno in two columns: the motorized infantry brigade of the division advanced strictly east to Ostrog, and the tank regiment was to first occupy Mlodava and there, turning right, advance along the road to Ostrog. In the region of Mlodava, it happened

the first meeting of the tank regiment of the German 11th TD with the motorized rifle regiment of the

43rd tank division: ***"The 43rd motorized rifle regiment, using its tank platoon as an anti-tank ambush, knocked out two enemy tanks and, having missed the enemy tanks, cut off the infantry advancing behind them with fire, opening machine-gun fire at her. As a result of the battle, the enemy was driven back to the western outskirts of Pogorelets. At 7 o'clock the enemy again repeated the attack with tanks, trying to bypass the 43rd SME on the left. The 228th Rifle Division and its 485th Howitzer Artillery Regiment left the front without warning and withdrew in disarray, completely exposing our left flank. Under the threat of complete encirclement and destruction, the 43rd SME withdrew with battle and occupied a new line of defense along an unnamed stream in the Kryluv area (settlement at the intersection of the Dubno highway, Exactly with the Stubla River. - M.S.) . During the battle, the 43rd SME inflicted the following losses on the enemy: up to 120 infantrymen***

moving behind the tanks, 2 tanks, 2 anti-tank guns and 4 machine guns were destroyed. [270] This description of the battle to the nearest minute (taking into account the hourly time difference) coincides with the documents of the enemy: ***"The advanced units of the division captured Mlodava at 06.30"***, moreover, the Germans admit the loss of not two, but three tanks. Meanwhile, at the turn of the river. Stubla near Kryluv, Varkovice advanced the combined tank regiment of the 43rd Panzer Division. The usual "miracle" for June 1941 also manifested itself this time: ***"At 5.00 on 26.6.41, the tank group of the division, united into one tank regiment, set out from the Netreb area, having 2 KV tanks, 2 T- 34 and 75 T-26 tanks. [270]*** It is noteworthy (and just as typical) that the absence of 3 KV tanks and 157 (!) T-26 tanks is not commented on in any way, the compilers of the report do not mention them at all. Two-thirds of the division's tanks, which were considered serviceable a

The compilers of the report explain the absence of the howitzer regiment of the division as follows: ***"The artillery of the division (43rd howitzer artillery regiment), moving from the Taikura region on tractor traction at a speed of 6 km per hour, was still on the way and could not open fire by the beginning of the attack."*** From Tajkura to Varkovice 29 km straight or 40 km by road. At a speed of 6 km / h, and with two "smoke breaks" of an hour each, the tractors had to crawl to Varkovice by 14.00. It was at this time that the tank attack began. However, no mention of the participation in the battle of the howitzer regiment of the division appears until the late evening of June 26. The very description of the battle sounds like a victory song:

"The command of the 43rd TD, having stopped the retreating infantry and artillery of the 228th RD, gave the order to join the battle together with the division. After the restoration of the necessary order, it was decided to launch an immediate attack ... At 14:00. the tanks of the division went on the offensive ... Having discovered the advance of our tanks, the enemy opened heavy barrage fire at the edge of the forest. The tanks, without stopping, entered the western outskirts of Kryluv, having two KV tanks and two T-34 tanks in front, turned around and, with hurricane fire, upset the anti-tank defense system and the infantry battle order, which

began to retreat west in disorder. Pursuing the enemy infantry, our tanks were met by fire from enemy tanks from ambushes from a place, but [the ambush] was attacked by the KV and T-34 tanks that rushed forward, and after them the T-26 tanks. The 86th tank and 43rd motorized rifle regiments, continuing to inflict defeat on the enemy infantry and confusing it, began an oncoming battle with enemy tanks. The enemy tanks, unable to withstand the fire and the rapid tank attack, began to retreat, lingering on the flanks, but were quickly knocked out by our tanks, which were maneuvering on the battlefield. Tanks KV and T-34, not having enough armor-piercing shells, fired with fragmentation shells and crushed and destroyed enemy tanks and anti-tank guns with their mass, moving from one line to another.

The battle lasted about four hours until total darkness fell. Pursuing the retreating enemy tanks, units of the division approached the eastern outskirts of Dubno at the line of Pantaliya, Rachin. The enemy, retreating to Dubno, blew up the bridges behind him, thus depriving the division [of the opportunity] to break through to Dubno on the shoulders of its retreating infantry ... Our losses: 2 KV tanks (both burned out), 15 T-26 tanks, 4 of them flamethrower; 128 people were killed and wounded. [270]

This story, very atypical for June 1941, raises some doubts. Firstly, the enemy, "disconcerted" and fled from the battlefield, "blowing up bridges behind him", knows nothing about it. No explosion of bridges on the river. Ikw, of course, was not, there is not even a mention of such intentions. In a very detailed combat journal of the 48th Wehrmacht Tank Corps (the Russian translation of the description of the events of June 26 takes 1290 words), only two phrases were found for the oncoming tank battle with the 43rd TD: "Already from 14.00, our tanks have been fighting with enemy tank ***units in the Varkovice area***" and ***"The tank regiment continues to fight near Varkovice in the evening."*** [188]

Secondly, and this is much more important than any descriptions of the battle, the “retreating enemy tanks” at 5 am on June 27 were already fighting near the settlement. Mizoch, i.e., found themselves 25 km east of Dubno, and after 14.30 continued their offensive towards Ostrog; as for the motorized infantry brigade of the 11th TD, on the evening of June 26 it reached the settlement. Bushcha (35 km southeast of Dubno) and at 6 am on June 27 captured Ostrog and crossings on the river. Goryn. Probably the only decent way to connect reality with the report of the command of the 43rd Panzer Division would be this explanation: there was no solid front, the situation was developing extremely dynamically, some motorized unit of the 43rd Panzer Division broke out of the battlefield near Mlodav Varkovice forward, reached suburbs of Dubno and looked through binoculars at the pointed roofs of the churches of the ancient city ...

On the evening of June 26, a new participant entered the battle near Mlynov, Dubno - the fresh 13th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, which had almost no combat losses since the beginning of the war. Capturing the evening of June 25 crossings over the river. Styr south of Lutsk, the 13th TD entered the Lutsk-Dubno highway and, after driving 35 km along it to the intersection with the Mlynov-Rivne road, turned left. This meant a break in the battle order of the divisions of the 19th mechanized corps and created a threat of the Germans capturing the city of Rovno on the move. In such a situation, there was nothing better to do but to withdraw back to Rovno the units of 19 MK that had retained their combat capability and controllability. The 43rd TD withdrew in a fairly organized manner, with a fight: ***“When the division retreated from Dubno to Rovno, 3 medium tanks were destroyed (2 were burned) and about 15 vehicles with enemy infantry were destroyed; our losses: 3 T-26 tanks, 1 flamethrower, 7 vehicles and 17 people killed and wounded. [270]***

The retreat to the Goryn River of the 228th Rifle Division in the report of its command is described as follows: ***“The division, having no help or communication from both the shtakor and units of the 36th SC, starting from 25.6.41, was forced to start withdrawing from the battle. At the same time, the division lost all howitzer artillery, light divisional artillery, all mortars, up to 50% of machine guns, up to 50% of its personnel, and 799 joint ventures lost 75% of their personnel killed, wounded and missing; in addition, the division lost all headquarters equipment, all means of communication, regimental and battalion artillery. [225]***

During June 27–28, the 43rd Panzer Division fought a fierce battle in the western suburbs of Rovno, holding back the advance of the German 13th TD. During these two days, the division lost 16 T-26 tanks and 101 people killed and wounded. Late in the evening of June 28, the remnants of two divisions of the 19th mechanized corps retreated to the line of the river. Goryn in the strip of Tuchin, Goshcha.

From the formations of the 9th mechanized corps, despite such famous commanders, there were practically no primary documents left; at least no one has published them yet. The archives of the mechanized corps, the 20th and 35th tank divisions nominally exist, but they are traditionally "empty" (do not contain operational documents of the first weeks of the war). It remains only to quote those few paragraphs from Vladimirovsky's monograph, in which he describes the participation of the 9th MK in the counterattack of the mechanized corps of the 5th Army : ***the flank of the***

advancing enemy grouping from the Stavok area, Romashkovka (settlement near the Lutsk highway, Rovno to the north of Olyk. - *M.S.*) ***went on the offensive at dawn on June 27, the 9th mechanized corps. The 35th Panzer Division of Colonel N. A. Novikov, moving in the direction of Stavki, Pokoszow,***

Zabolotse, Mlyniv, reached the line of klx at 3–4 o'clock on June 27. Malin, Uezdtse (15 km north of Mlynuva), where it came into contact with the advanced units of the enemy's 299th infantry division. At this turn, the 35th Panzer Division turned around and defended it until the end of June 27 (that is, there was no offensive at all after "contact with the enemy." - *M.S.*). ***The 20th Panzer Division of Colonel M.E. Katukov, moving to the left of the 35th Panzer Division in the general direction of Olyka, Dolgoshiy,***

Mlyniv, when approaching Petushkov at 3 o'clock on June 27, was fired from ambushes by machine-gun fire from units of the 13th th tank and 299th infantry divisions of the enemy. Turning into battle formation, the 20th Panzer Division at 07:00 on June 27 went on the offensive against Petushkov. During the day, units of the division fought a fierce battle for the capture of Petushki and Dolgoshiy, defended by units of the 299th infantry and 13th tank divisions of the enemy (how did the "units of the 13th TD" get there, advancing at that time along the Mlynov, Rovno highway and already approached to the western outskirts of Rovno, it is difficult to understand. - M.S.). In the afternoon, the enemy, having felt the open flanks of the 20th TD and the gaps between its units, began to bypass the division, threatening to enter its rear and encirclement.

In this situation, the commander of the 9th mechanized corps decided on June 27, at nightfall, to withdraw the 35th and 20th tank divisions to the line of the southern edge of the forest in the Romashevskaya, Klevan area,

where they entrenched themselves. [43] With this back-and-forth movement, southwest of the Lutsk-Rivne highway and back, the counterattack of the 9th Mechanized Corps began and ended within one day. Perhaps an even better option would be no

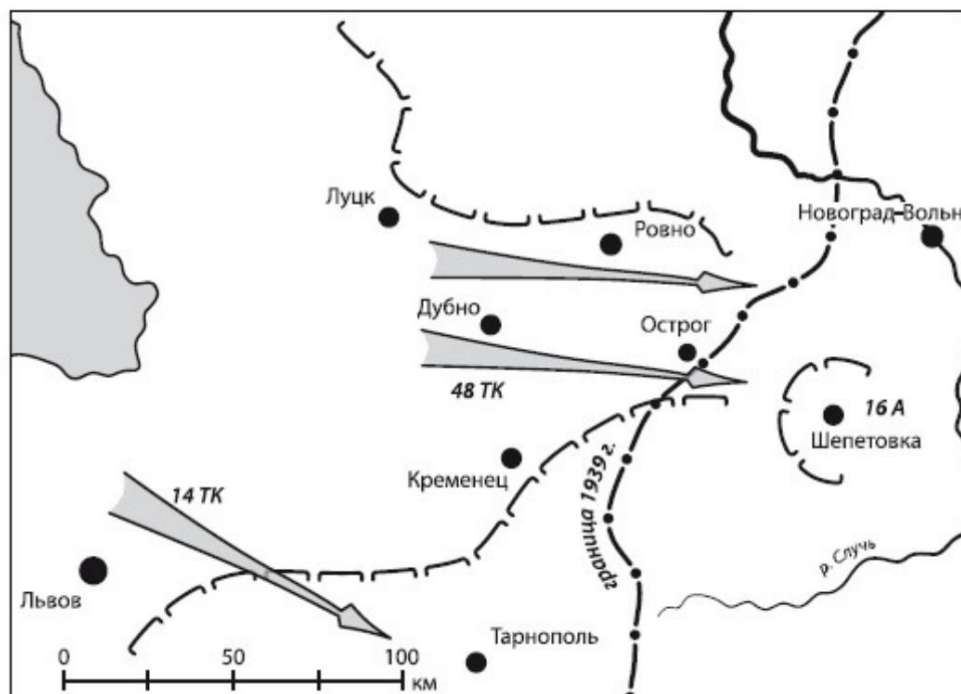
border of the river Putilovka near Olyk, because in the afternoon of June 28, the German 14th Panzer Division entered the highway. Parts of the 9th mechanized corps held back the offensive of the 14th TD for two days (June 28 and 29), which did not allow the enemy to overcome the line of the river on the move and along the shortest path (from

Klevan to the river only 10 km). Goryn. Summing up the combat operations of the 9th and 19th mechanized corps and evaluating the possible options for their use from the point of view of our current knowledge, we can assume that the best thing would be to initially abandon offensive attempts, concentrate tank divisions on the eastern banks of the Goryn and Stubla rivers, concentrating forces near the Rovno-Goshcha highway, and bury most of the tanks in the ground, using them as fixed firing points. Perhaps in this case, the losses would have been smaller, and the steady advance of the 3rd Wehrmacht TC to the east could have been delayed for a few more days.

Chapter 2.5 Southwestern Front. Results

Late in the evening of June 30, Battle Order No. 0027 was approved at the headquarters of the Southwestern *Front . front, by 9.7.41, they withdraw to the line of the fortified regions of Korostensky, Novograd Volynsky, Shepetovsky, Starokonstantinovsky and Proskurovsky, where, relying on fortified areas, they organize a stubborn defense ... The intermediate line of Sarna, r. Sluch, Ostrug, Skalat, Chortkov, Kolomyia, Berkhomet are held until 6.7.41. [280]*

The decision on the general withdrawal of troops to the line of fortified areas on the "old border" could have been one of the reasonable options for action if it had been taken in the first hours of the war [102]. By the end of the ninth day of hostilities, the situation had changed radically. At the time of signing order No. 0027, the enemy, with the help of two tank divisions (13th TD and 11th TD), crossed the river. Goryn in the Goshcha area (near the highway Rivne, Novograd-Volynsky) and Ostrog. (Fig. 21.) This meant that the intermediate withdrawal line established by the order at two of its points was already occupied by the enemy. To the south, from Lvov to Zolochiv, Tarnopol and further to the "old border", the 14th Tank Corps of the Wehrmacht developed the offensive.



Rice. 21. Southwestern Front. The end of June

1941. In the Novograd-Volyn direction, the offensive of the 3rd Wehrmacht TC was held back by the remnants of units of the 9th and 19th mechanized corps, and in the Ostrog, Shepetovka zone, on the offensive path of the 48th Wehrmacht TC, due to a coincidence, formations of the 16th Army of the Second strategic echelon deployed there from the Far East in May-June. This made it possible to stop the advance of the enemy's motorized units for several days, but could not change the situation as a whole - by June 6, the Sarny, Ostrog, Skalat, Chortkov line was already in the German rear, and not only tank divisions, but also many infantry divisions advanced east of this line Wehrmacht. By July 9-10 (when the troops of the South-Western Front, in accordance with order No. 0027, were to withdraw to the line of fortified areas), German motorized formations broke through the line of Shepetovskiy, Novograd-Volynskiy and Starokonstantinovskiy URs to the full depth, crossed the Sluch River and reached Zhitomir and Berdichev. On this, the defensive operation along the line of the "old border" ended, and did not begin. During the 20 days of the war, the Wehrmacht infantry passed 250 km from the border to the Sluch River (judging by the map of the German General Staff, by the evening of July 10, at the turn of the Sluch River or east of it, there were 299, 298, 44, 111, 75, 57, 9 and 297- I infantry divisions), and the tanks went even further to the east. Such a pace was in no way inferior to what Soviet historiography called "the triumphal march of German troops across France." Yes, and in September 1939, during the so-called. "liberation campaign", the Red

the eastern provinces of Poland (later called "Western Ukraine") a little faster - and this despite the fact that the Polish army by that time had already was in a state of agony.

What price did the Wehrmacht pay for a success of this magnitude? First of all, I want to note the staggering numbers of losses of anti-tank guns in the formations of the 1st Tank Group (recall that these are not only tank and motorized, but also infantry divisions attached to tank corps at the initial stage of the operation). **[298]** During the long 42 days of the war, during the time when the Southwestern Front lost more than 4 thousand tanks, the Germans lost only 105 anti-tank guns (see table 10). **Table**

10

	3 TK	48 TK	14 TK	всего
37-мм Pak-36	27	42	18	87
50-мм Pak-38	4	6	5	15
88-мм Flak	3	—	—	3

The last two lines of the table deserve special attention. One side of the armed confrontation is losing hundreds of "new types" tanks, while the other side is losing only 18 guns, theoretically capable of penetrating the armor of the KV or T-34. Here it is also necessary to take into account that the table shows the losses on August 3, and the tanks in the tank units of the Southwestern Front "ended" 3-4 weeks earlier in worthy of mention quantities; accordingly, some (hardly anyone can give exact numbers) part of these guns was lost already without any interaction with the tanks of the Red Army. Of course, not only the artillerymen of the divisions of the 1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht fired at Soviet tanks. Some comrades argue that the heavy Soviet tanks were destroyed mainly by the fire of 88-mm anti-aircraft guns, and the elite anti-aircraft regiment "Hermann Goering" was used for these purposes in the offensive zone of Army Group South. Alas, the loss of personnel of this unit casts doubt on the fact that German anti-aircraft gunners even saw more than a dozen KV tanks. As of July 2, the losses amounted to 5 people killed and 21 wounded; by July 16, the regiment's losses had grown to 10 killed and 35 wounded. **[299]** At the same time, one should not forget that no one released anti-aircraft gunners from their direct duties, and Soviet planes bombed and fired at them with far from inflatable balls ...

Losses (killed, wounded, missing) of the personnel of the motorized formations of the Army Group "South" are presented in table 11. **[300]**

	Исходная численность	Потери к 2-4. 7	Потери к 14-16. 7	%%
11 тд	16 148	923	2368	14,0
16 тд	17 133	644	1855	10,8
13 тд	16 811	361	1272	7,6
14 тд	16 811	397	1475	8,8
9 тд	16 295	?	1053	6,5
16 мд	15 266	92	792	5,2
25 мд	15 079	236	890	5,9
СС «Викинг»	19 155	?	644	3,4
средн. арифм.	16 587		1293	7,7

Table 11

The unusually high (by the standards of the Wehrmacht) losses of tank divisions of the 48th TK is a completely understandable result of the battle near Dubno, near Ostrog (where the 11th TD was almost completely alone, under a hail of Soviet air strikes [103] fought against the 109th MD, 213th MD and the tank regiment of the 57th TD) and near Berdichev, where fresh 16th mechanized corps and 3rd PTABR were on the way of German tanks, which had not previously participated in the battles. The relatively low losses of formations of the 14th TK (9th TD and the Viking SS motorized division) are equally easily explained - the corps was put into battle 6–7 days later than the others and advanced south of the main battle area.

The reason for the relatively low losses of the motorized divisions of the 48th and 3rd tank corps (16th MD and 25th MD) is not so obvious. These divisions invariably advanced in the second echelon of their corps, lagging behind the advanced tank divisions by 1–2 days and by 20–40 km on the ground; apparently, even this difference was enough to make their losses half as much. If such an assumption is correct, then it suggests that even in those cases when the Germans ran into the resistance of the Red Army units, this resistance did not last long, and the collection of prisoners and trophies remained for the second echelon divisions. The losses of infantry divisions assigned to tank corps were generally even lower. So, by July 2, the

57th Infantry Division (the same one against which the counterattack of the 12th Panzer Division crashed) lost 211 people (54 killed, 157 wounded), the 44th Infantry Division lost only 104 people, the 298th Infantry Division lost 520 people (such high, by the standards of the Wehrmacht, losses are most likely the result of battles against the 131st motorized division of the 9th MK north of Lutsk). In general and on average, the division of the 1st Tank Group in the battles of the first three weeks of the war

lost 60 people a day. For twice the time

segment, for 42 days of the war (until August 3), the 1st TGr lost 16,584 people (5,029 killed and missing, 11,555 wounded), that is, about 45 per division per day. **[301]** In general, Army Group South (excluding the 11th Army) from June 22 to July 20 lost 43.7 thousand people killed, wounded and missing, which, in terms of the number of divisions, gives the same (46 people per day) loss figures. **[305]** The absolute maximum, apparently, should be considered the losses of the 68th Infantry Division, which in three days of fighting (June 24–26) with units of the 4th Mechanized Corps near Krakovets, Yavorov lost 547 people killed and wounded (182 per day).

The irretrievable losses of German tanks were exceptionally low. By July 5, the 1st Panzer Group had lost only 85 tanks, and this number included 11 Pz-I tankettes. **[302]** In the future, the rate of growth of losses even decreased, and by August 3, the total irretrievable losses of German tanks (including Pz-I and the so-called "commander's") amounted to 156 units. **[303]** Comparing these figures with the losses of personnel, we see that in the tank divisions of the Wehrmacht, for one irretrievably lost tank, there were 50–70 killed and wounded people. Even if we divide this figure by four (assuming that the losses of the personnel of the tank regiment were about one-fourth of the losses of the division), then the losses of tankers in the warring army will still turn out to be an order of magnitude greater than the losses tanks.

The Germans took care of their small tanks, so each division had a large (exceeding irretrievable losses) number of tanks temporarily out of order and under repair. In mid-July, the specific loss pattern was as follows: **[304]**

Table

12

	безвозврат	ремонт
11 тд (к 19.7)	30	33
16 тд (к 13.7)	54	61
13 тд (к 18.7)	8	42
14 тд (к 18.7)	17	35
9 тд (к 13.7)	10	55
Всего:	119	226

Taken together in a single table, these figures clearly show that in actively fighting divisions (11th TD, 16th TD) irretrievable losses are approximately equal to the number of tanks temporarily out of action. On the contrary, where they marched more than they fought (9 td), there are significantly more tanks in repair than irretrievably lost ones. This

gives grounds to assume that temporarily out of order tanks are not only (and not so much) knocked out, but not finished off by enemy fire, but also broken down for technical reasons. It is also worth recalling that without exception, all German tanks ran on gasoline, and the calibers of Soviet anti-tank guns began with 45 mm; a German tank that actually received a projectile in the side had a great chance of catching fire, and a burned-out tank cannot be repaired (the so-called "vacation" of armored steel occurs from heating, after which the remains of the tank are suitable only for remelting). "A lot" and "little" are relative terms. If we recall that by the beginning of the war, the troops of the Kiev OVO were armed with 1900 anti-tank 45-mm guns, 870 divisional 76-mm guns, 1140 anti-aircraft guns of 76 mm and 85 mm caliber (and this is not counting 4.5 thousand 45-mm and 76-mm guns in the turrets of tanks and armored vehicles), then against this background, the losses of Wehrmacht tanks are negligible. In relation to the initial number of tanks of the 1st TGr (728 units), the losses turned out to be very large, and already in mid-July a little more than half of the initial number of tanks was in good condition. In fact, the tank formations of the Wehrmacht turned into a motorized infantry division, reinforced by a battalion

tanks.

Now let's look at the situation from the other side of the front. One of the many fundamental differences between the USSR and France or Poland was the geography of a completely different scale, and on this scale, the loss of a "slot of land" measuring 250 by 250 km in itself was not a catastrophe [104]. The misfortune, the real irreversible misfortune, was the loss of the army that was in this territory. What was managed to be withdrawn beyond the line of fortified areas on the "old border" was only scattered remnants of the troops of the Kiev OVO, which, as of the morning of June 22, was not inferior in number and armament to the armies of the largest European powers. A document has been preserved that makes it possible to

present the losses of the troops of the front in concrete numbers. At the headquarters of the South-Western Front, a certificate was prepared "Information on formations and individual units that are part of the armies of the front as of 15.7.41." [281] The certificate contains data on the number of personnel for 28 divisions (of all types). The arithmetic average is 4086 people, and this, at first glance, suggests that the losses amounted to "only" 60% of the initial number of personnel. But this is a crafty figure, reminiscent of the notorious "average temperature in the hospital." For a more realistic assessment, one should, firstly, take into account that the list of 28 divisions included three divisions of the 12th Army (44th and 192nd Guards Rifle Division and 240th Guards Rifle Division), which were practically inactive and therefore did not suffer noticeable losses; enough

remove them from the general list, as the average number of front divisions drops to 3317 people. But

that's not all. Regarding the 15 rifle (including mountain rifle) divisions of the front, the compilers of the certificate were forced to limit themselves to the short "no reports", which in the real situation of the summer of 1941 did not give grounds for optimism; this list included, for example, the 124th SD, which later emerged from the encirclement of 1.5 thousand people, and the 228th SD, defeated in several days of fighting near Mlynov and Dubno. Three rifle divisions of the 6th Army (the heroic 41st and the 97th and 159th, which melted in the first days of the war in the Lvov direction) do not appear on the list at all; the certificate also lacks data on six divisions of the 8th and 15th mechanized corps. It is clear that if the figures of the remnants of the personnel of these formations were taken into account in the certificate, then the average number of front divisions would be less than 3 thousand. Reasonable doubts are caused by the reliability of the data themselves included in the

certificate. Here, for example, is the 135th Infantry Division (5th Army), which was defeated on June 24 in the very first battle near Voinitsa and later occasionally appears in documents only in the context of "parts of the division randomly retreated." As Vladimirsky writes (and he writes not from memory, but with reference to the primary document stored in TsAMO), by June 30, **"only 1511 people remained in the 135th rifle division, along with the 16th rifle regiment of the 87th division."** [43] Two weeks later, the number of people in the division could only become smaller, however, in the certificate of the headquarters of the South-Western Front in the line of the 135th rifle division there is the figure 3335. It is alleged that there were still 56 guns left in the division, but it is very difficult to believe that the division, which lost more than 80% of the personnel, retained half of the artillery pieces.

According to the compilers of the certificate, in the 81st motorized division (4 MK) by July 15 there were still 33 guns. Where does this "abundance" come from? The artillery regiment of the division was defeated, and all its materiel was lost on June 25, in the battle near Krakovets, Yavorov. Opersvodka No. 010 of the headquarters of the 81st MD, compiled at 23.00 on July 8, after the withdrawal of the remnants of the division to the rear, has been preserved. In accordance with this document, there are no guns at all in the 202nd MRR, two 76-mm guns remain in the 323rd MRR, in the artillery regiment of the division **"up to 20% of the personnel, there is no artillery, except for rifles there is no weapons"**, information on there is no state of the anti-tank division. [297] Further, it is reported that a "consolidated battalion" was formed from the remnants of the 202nd and 323rd regiments, however, in the certificate, the strength of the 81st MD is indicated in the amount of 3287 people. Too much for a battalion...

Accurate data on the losses of the Southwestern Front will never be given; The available primary documents suggest that by July 10, no less than 70-80% of the personnel in the divisions that were in the enemy offensive zone had been lost. In total, this means the loss of **300 - 350 thousand people, which is ten times more losses**. The facts force us to reconsider historiography, what has been established in the domestic **enemy** . the opinion that in the first weeks of the war on the Southwestern Front - unlike the neighboring Western Front - everything was not so bad, the encirclement catastrophe was avoided, and the troops were more or less organizedly withdrawn to the east. Alas, to the east, beyond the line of the "old border", the remnants of the troops were withdrawn, in which the division turned into a badly battered rifle regiment.

From the mechanized formations of the Southwestern Front - the largest and most powerful in the entire Red Army - there were numbers and the name "tank division". In a completely official statistical collection, "Secrecy has been removed. Losses of the Armed Forces of the USSR "it is reported that by July 6 the Southwestern Front had irretrievably lost 4381 tanks. **[282] 50 times more enemy casualties** . Of course, the claimed attempt to establish Soviet losses to within a single tank can hardly be taken seriously, but the overall order of magnitude is beyond doubt: the tanks were almost completely lost (over 90%). With regard to many divisions that found themselves in the epicenter of the battle in Western Ukraine, the "almost" clause can be completely removed.

Available documents allow in some cases to "tweak the sharpness" and consider the process of the disappearance of mighty mechanized corps in detail. Let's start with the 37th Panzer Division (15th MK), after which there was a report with a detailed list of personnel losses [105]. **[283]** So, 103 people were killed, 280 were wounded. The numbers are very modest, in any division of the Wehrmacht that fought from June 22, there were significantly more dead and wounded. But the list of losses of the 37th Panzer Division does not end with these figures, it is just

beginning. 653 people "disappeared". 2040 people left with the cryptic wording "for other reasons." Is it all losses? No, not yet. Approximately 2.5 thousand people disappeared without any explanation. Simple arithmetic leads us to this conclusion: by the beginning of the war, the division had (according to the August report of the command) 9,775 people, and by July 12, 2,423 people came to the concentration area near the city of Piryatin (this is already beyond the Dnieper). **[200]** According to the August report of the command of the 15th MK - even less, only 2021 people. **[198]**

This is how the "pyramid" of irretrievable losses turns out: 103, 653, 4500. Killed, "missing", disappeared. By a strange coincidence of arithmetic circumstances, the number of those killed is exactly 50 times less than the number of "missing". It is worth paying attention to the amazing ratio of losses of tanks and tankers. Only 6 tanks (1 T-34 and 5 T-26) out of 312, which were listed as serviceable by the beginning of the war, came to Piryatin. But at the same time, the losses of the personnel of the two tank regiments of the division taken into account (we emphasize this word with three lines) amount to only 112 people (50 killed, 62 wounded) [106]. But maybe this is such a unique, extremely disorganized division? Let's continue the boring work with numbers and turn to the documents of the division, indeed, unique.

The 34th Panzer Division of Colonel Vasilyev actually fought for five whole days (from June 26 to 30), in the last of these days the enemy was outnumbered many times over, the 34th Panzer created such problems for the Germans that they were reflected in the documents of the Wehrmacht High Command; many primary documents remained from this division, including the Journal of Combat Actions, compiled directly in the course of these actions. The division is undoubtedly unique, the best of the best. In the August report on the combat operations of the division, the following numbers of personnel losses are given: 209 killed, 456 wounded and sick, 4388 missing. **[284]** Alas, even in this heroic division, there are 20 times more lost than those killed. But here, too, the arithmetic of losses categorically "does not converge" — in addition to the clearly accounted for "missing", several thousand more people disappeared to no one knows where [107]. And in this division, the number of lost tanks (275 units, not counting the faulty ones, not counting all the heavy five-tower giants T-35) significantly exceeds the counted number of killed and wounded in two tank regiments (136 people in total). **[285]**

Now let's turn to the documents of the mighty 4th mechanized corps Vlasov. With an insignificant result, having fought on the Lvov ledge, the corps began a swift march to the east. Lvov was left on June 29, on July 3 the mechanized corps was already in Zbarazh (135 km east of Lvov), the morning of July 9 found 4 MK in the area of \u200b\u200bthe town of Ivanopol (180 km from Zbarazh). Finally, on July 12, the remnants of the most powerful tank formation in the Red Army crossed the Kyiv bridges across the Dnieper and concentrated in the Priluki area (650 km east of the border). In fact, there was no unified and controlled mechanized corps for a long time, since during the withdrawal, individual divisions of the corps divisions were united, separated, transferred to other parts of the front, etc.

Judging by the report of the commander of the 32nd TD, the losses of this division, which was armed with a record number of "new types" tanks (49 KV and 173 T-34), were as follows. A total of 269 tanks were lost: 37 KV, 146 T-34, 28 BT-7, 58 T-26. [286] It is impossible to understand where, when and under what circumstances such a mountain of military equipment was lost. In the June battles, the division, judging by the same report, lost 34 tanks (15 in a counterattack near Yavorov, 8 when retreating to Lvov, 11 tanks allegedly lost two battalions sent to Radzekhuv). The only episode related to the combat losses of tanks during the retreat to the east is described in the report as follows:

"On July 10, 1941, a group of tanks under Captain Karpov (10 tanks and 2 armored vehicles) concentrated in the Beizymovka area and attacked the enemy in the direction of Olshanka at 20 o'clock, but, not supported by infantry, retreated at 23 o'clock and took up defenses 300-400 m south Olshanka. During the next day, the group fought an unbearable battle in the same area, and as a result of the flight from the front of the 32nd motorized rifle regiment, it was destroyed and left on the battlefield, with the

exception of one tank. [287] In total, 43 tanks lost in battle are recruited. It can be assumed that several more pieces were lost in skirmishes with the enemy, which the compilers of the report forgot to mention. On July 3, the division transferred 10 tanks to another unit, which is described in the report with a completely untranslatable phrase: "***The commander of the 37th rifle corps, on behalf of the Military Council*** (which Armed Forces? Front? Army?), ***Were detained and left to reinforce the 32nd separate anti-aircraft artillery divisions*** (what is this?) ***10 tanks under the command of Captain Yegorov.***

[288] Be that as it may, the loss of about 200 tanks does not have any explanation in the report.

The losses of the personnel of the 32nd Panzer Division are indicated twice and in different ways. The text of the report itself says: ***"The division lost 103 people killed and 259 people wounded."*** However, in the appendix to the report ("information on the losses of units of 32 TD for the period from 22.6 to 30.7. 41"), large numbers are given: a total of 495 people were lost (139 killed, 356 wounded), including 191 people in two tank regiments (64 killed, 127 wounded). Losses are approximately the same order as in the divisions mentioned above, the losses of the personnel of tank regiments are also less than the number of lost tanks. Most importantly, the data given in the report on the number of killed and wounded are ten times less than the actual losses of the division. The division entered the war with 9,337 men, and by July 15, according to the information of the front headquarters, only 736 men remained in it. [281] Where are the eight thousand more?

The second tank division of the 4th MK was equipped with the latest tanks a little worse - the 8th TD was armed with 50 KV and 140 T-34s (as well as 122 serviceable tanks of the "old types"). I was not able to establish the exact number of personnel of the division from the revealed documents, but, knowing the total number of people in the mechanized corps (33,734 people), it can be assumed that there were at least 9.5-10 thousand people in the division. By July 13, the state of the 8th TD in the Journal of Combat Actions was described as follows: ***"The division (9 tanks, 600 SMEs) is on the defensive on the wide front Andrushevka, Mal. Klitenka, Kropivna..." [108]*** Prior to this, judging by the entries in the same ZhBD, the division lost 50 tanks in June battles (including the loss of a "combined tank regiment" transferred to the operational subordination of the commander of the 15th mechanized corps). Another 9 tanks were lost during the withdrawal. Where is everyone else?

The report on the combat operations of the 8th Panzer Division is accompanied by the "Statement of the availability of combat and auxiliary vehicles." [289] This document is notable for revealing the incredible survivability of the indestructible Soviet trucks. By August 1, 3 tanks remained in the division - out of 312 that were considered serviceable as of June 22. Lost 99% of the tanks. But out of 572 ZIS-5 trucks, 317 pieces survived, out of 360 cargo trucks, 139 survived. Yes, and passenger cars turned out to be invulnerable - out of 23, 17 survived.

Such interesting proportions could be understood in a situation where tanks are lost during many days of fierce battles; in this case, the loss of trucks of a tank division, which, although they are not far from the battlefield, but still do not go to the very front line, could be less. But the 8th Panzer lost its tanks during multi-day marches. As modern Russian historians explain to us, from the strikes of the ubiquitous and all-destroying German aviation. What kind of bombing is this, under which diesel (!) Tanks, covered with armor that is impenetrable to fragments, burn like candles, and miserable plywood "gas trucks" with gasoline engines keep going, going, and going?

Against the background of such "order in the tank units", the report on the losses of personnel of the 8th TD already looks quite ordinary. [290] In the division, which by July 13 had become an incomplete battalion, only the following losses were taken into account (as of July 30): 306 killed, 696 wounded, 1,033 missing. The absence of another 6-6.5 thousand people is not explained in any way. Another

"old" personnel division, which received a fair amount of "new types" tanks (63 KV and 38 T-34) before the start of the war, is the 10th Panzer. The division went beyond the Dnieper, having in its composition 4650 people (according to

report of the command of 15 MK) or even 5253 (according to the report of the division command). This is an absolute "record" among all tank divisions of the Southwestern Front. Here, however, it is appropriate to recall the aphorism about "half-empty or half-full glass." The 10th TD lost half of its personnel - is it very little or very much? No less relevant is the question of where these 5 thousand people were, if on July 7 from all parts of the division it was possible to assemble a ***"combined infantry battalion from the 10th MSP, a tank company from the 20th TP, a consolidated artillery battalion consisting of 3 guns 152-mm and 2 122-mm guns, a reconnaissance company consisting of 6 armored vehicles and 2 BT tanks, a communications platoon and 2 5-AK radios. [291]***

Loss arithmetic traditionally "does not converge". The August report of the division command gives the following figures: 210 killed, 587 wounded. There is no simple and honest column "missing in action", it has been replaced by such polysyllabic constructions as "did not return from the battlefield when attacking and when leaving the battle", "lagged behind on the march", "did not leave the battle when surrounded by the enemy"; in total, 2145 people left for these reasons. [292] About 1.5 thousand more (and this is if you believe that 5 thousand people went beyond the Dnieper to Piryatin!) are absent without explanation.

In the June battles at Radzekhuv and Lopatin, the 10th TD lost (more precisely, these losses are mentioned in the reports of the division and mechanized corps command) exactly 60 tanks, including 14 KV and 7 T-34s. After that, there was a continuous retreat to the east, but by the morning of July 6, only 20 tanks remained in the division (including 2 KVs and 3 T-34s). About 250 tanks, including 47 invincible KVs and 28 T-34s, were lost no one knows where and how. Everything went much better with cars: 648 units left the Dnieper (more than half of the original number of vehicles). [293]

The causes and circumstances of the losses of Soviet tanks can also be looked at from the other side of the front. According to the reports of the divisions of the 48th Panzer Corps of the Wehrmacht (11th TD, 16th TD, 16th MD), by July 14–15 (and by this date the 8th, 15th and 16th mechanized corps had already lost almost all of their tanks) they chalked up, respectively, 390, 357 and 64 destroyed and captured Soviet tanks. [310] Even if, contrary to all logic, we assume that the reports of the Wehrmacht headquarters were compiled with a zero level of postscripts, then in this case it turns out that the Germans did not even see about two-thirds of the actual number of Soviet tanks (more precisely, they saw much later, when the rear units combed the area and counted the trophies).

The final conclusion from this sea of numbers is obvious: the combat (directly related to the enemy's influence) losses of the Southwestern Front are many times less than the losses from overt and covert

desertion. The fat herds of Soviet/Russian scientists, who had been grazing in the field of studying the history of the Great Patriotic War for half a century, did not see these figures point-blank. It is understandable - "historians" had to tell stories about "mass heroism unparalleled in history." Another thing is much more important - did the high command of the Red Army understand the meaning of what happened? Today, on the basis of the identified documents, we can give a very specific answer to this question - even as we understand it! There is a sheet

of paper in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense (TsAMO. F. 38. Op. 11360. D. 5. L. 35). On it is a typewritten table with figures for the initial number and loss of tanks and vehicles of the 2nd and 18th mechanized corps of the Southern Front. Quite typical figures: the tanks were gone, the cars remained.

These figures are underlined by someone's hand, and at the bottom of the sheet, in a round, clear handwriting, it is written: ***"It is clear that they did not lead the rear, they succumbed to panic and draped, leaving the corps without used supplies and f***

The assistant to the commander of the South-Western Front, Major General of the Tank Forces Volsky, also tried to

clarify the situation: ***"The loss figures in the statement are shown purely indicative. The material has been collected, there are acts for each machine of irretrievable losses, but the final answer can only be submitted after reviewing the acts, conducting an additional investigation, which should reveal the true causes and number of irretrievable losses ... I ask for the second time to send commissions to review the materials on the spot and establish the causes of irretrievable losses the material part..." [294] "Now I am devoting***

exceptional attention to this clarification of why so much materiel has been lost, under what circumstances exactly the materiel has been left behind and how much of it. Apparently, someone will have to be brought to trial, who left the materiel out of confusion, so that it would be disgraceful for the future ...

" [295] T-26s have a tendency to spoil the car and not go into battle. These are individuals, but nonetheless they exist. The struggle is simple: on trial and execution, but it is very difficult to establish the fact of damage. There were cases when a number of cars went into the forest, defended in the forest with reference to a malfunction, and after the battle they left. In this case, the political apparatus and the Special Department must work hard..." [296] "In this case" there could be exactly two options.

Or condescendingly wave your hand, saying something like "for one beaten they give two unbeaten." Or call everything that happened in the first days of the war "treason", "sabotage", "complicity with the enemy" and punish accordingly.

It was impossible to confine ourselves to a severe reprimand in a situation where for one killed in battle there are 50 disappeared, when tanks break down all at once, and vehicles are rapidly rushing east. Only one person could choose one of the two, and everyone knew his name. Stalin thought about it and made a decision in mid-July. "So that it would be repulsive for the future" they arrested (and subsequently shot) a large group of the highest command staff of the Western Front, headed by General of the Army Pavlov. The Leader forgave all the other commanders - he had no other generals for this war.

Part 3. In the band of Army Group Center

Chapter 3.1 Composition, deployment, plans of the parties

In the previous chapters of the book, we examined the course of hostilities in Western Ukraine, in the zone of the Southwestern Front. The most powerful grouping of troops in the entire Red Army was deployed there, and the enemy - two armies of the Army Group "South" - was many times inferior to it in a number of parameters (the number of artillery, tanks, aviation). In Belarus, the situation was much more complicated. For the Wehrmacht, this was the direction of the main - on the scale of the entire campaign against the USSR - strike, and the most powerful Army Group Center was concentrated there, in some respects superior to the other two (GA North and South) combined. From the air, the offensive of the German troops was supported by the 2nd Air Fleet, the largest aviation group, which was armed with half of all combat aircraft of the Eastern Front (including all Ju-87 dive bombers).

The presence in the GA "Center" of two strike mechanized groups (2nd and 3rd Tank Groups, a total of 9 tank and 7 motorized divisions) allowed the enemy to plan and conduct an operation to deeply encircle and encircle the troops of the Western Front. As a result, only a few commanders and headquarters managed to escape from the "boiler". The defeat of the troops on the battlefield was supplemented by a demonstrative massacre perpetrated by Stalin over the command of the Western Front. One of the consequences of this affects the work of historians to this day - very few primary documents, reports, reports remain from the defeated front; even memoirs often had no one to write.

This circumstance will noticeably affect the content of this Part of the book: if earlier we used Wehrmacht documents only for supplementing, reconciling and "controlling", then here in many cases they will turn out to be the only source of information.

"Bagration" and "Barbarossa"

Before counting tanks, guns, aircraft and compiling tables of the balance of forces of the parties, you should familiarize yourself with the "third party", with the features of the terrain, which in this theater of military operations to a large extent determined their (action) course and outcome. The territory of Belarus and southern Lithuania is covered by the largest forest areas in Europe (see Fig. 10). South of the road Brest, Slutsk, Bobruisk, there is a boundless "sea" of swamps and forests of Polissya, there are no roads and not everywhere

walking paths. To the north of the Slutsk-Rogachev line, another huge one begins, stretching for hundreds of kilometers along both banks of the river. Berezina forest area. Dotted with "green spots" (Supraslskaya, Belovezhskaya, Nalibokskaya Pushcha) map of Belarus and many others

places.

However, the white areas in Fig. 10 (it was compiled on the basis of a pre-war map of the General Staff of the Red Army with the wonderful name "Moscow, Berlin") indicate by no means a smooth steppe; relatively open areas of the terrain are swampy somewhere, covered with copse somewhere, cut up by the channels of countless small rivers, tributaries of the Neman and Pripyat. In fact, the motorized units of the Wehrmacht could only enter the "operational space" by crossing to the eastern bank of the Dnieper, but they had to go 450–550 km from the border to the Dnieper; not every European country has such dimensions. In such terrain, advancing nine panzer divisions for 500 km is not an easy task, even in the absence of any enemy. In the presence of the enemy,

the task becomes incredibly difficult: a rifle company (two hundred young healthy men) can stop the movement of a tank division simply by building an ordinary forest blockage on the road. A platoon of sappers who blew up the bridge across the forest stream and mined the approaches to it can delay the advance by a day. The usual ideas about the balance of power lose their meaning here; a tank battalion differs from a tank division only in the length of the marching column - neither the battalion nor the division will be able to deploy in battle formation on the road, sandwiched on both sides by a wall of forest or the emerald green of a swamp bog, 500 meters from the meeting point with the enemy, the battlefield is no longer seen in

at the tail of the column you can't even hear it ...

Nevertheless, it is possible to conduct a successful offensive operation in Belarus, which has been practically proven, and twice: from west to east in the summer of 41st, from east to west in the summer of 44th. Here we will begin with the operation "Bagration", carried out by the forces of the four fronts of the Red Army in the summer of 1944. First of all, we note that everyone who

has ever written about this - be it historians, journalists or the generals who led the operation - unanimously characterize Bagration as a brilliantly organized operation, as an outstanding success and a demonstration of the highest level of combat capability of the Red Army achieved after a hard and bloody "school" of three years of war. Modern Russian historians already allow themselves to recall that the operation of the summer of 1944 was not the first, and not the second, and not even the tenth attempt to break through the defenses of the German

troops at the turn of Vitebsk, Orsha, the Dnieper River. Operation Bagration was a successful - and therefore included in the school history books - attempt to carry out a large-scale offensive in Belarus. It was preceded by the following:

“Starting from October 12, 1943 to April 1, 1944, the Western Front under the command of Army General Sokolovsky conducted eleven operations in the Orsha and Vitebsk directions ... All these operations ended unsuccessfully, and the front did not solve the tasks set by the Headquarters. In none of the listed operations was the enemy’s defense breached, even to its tactical depth, the operation ended, at best, with a slight penetration into the enemy’s defenses ... The Western Front in all ongoing operations had a clear superiority over the enemy in forces and means. Despite this, all operations ended in failure, and the front did not move forward since October ... ” [306] This is a quote from the report (until the

collapse of the USSR remained secret) of a special commission chaired by Malenkov, sent by the State Defense Committee to clarify the circumstances and reasons for the ineffectiveness actions of the Western Front. Yes, of course, against the backdrop of the grandiose operation "Bagration", the above-mentioned offensive attempts seem to be insignificant episodes of the war, but even in these "episodes" the number of Red Army troops involved (up to 32–34 rifle divisions) was already quite comparable with the combat strength of the Center June 1941.

As for the cost of failure, the Western Front used up 7,261 carloads of ammunition in the course of failed attempts to go on the offensive. The most terrible “price” is determined by the figures of 62.3 thousand killed and 219.4 thousand wounded. **[306]** But that's not all. In addition to 11 unsuccessful attempts by the Western Front to break through the northern flank of the defense of the GA "Center", there were also three relatively successful offensive operations carried out by the Belorussian Front on the southern flank (Gomel-Rechitsa on November 20-30, 1943, Kalinkovichi-Mozyr on January 8-30, 1944 ., Rogachev-Zhlobinskaya February 21–26, 1944). As a result of these operations, it was possible to advance 100 km and create a bridgehead in the interfluvium of the Pripyat and the Dnieper for a further offensive on the flank and rear of the main enemy grouping. The price of local success: 41.2 thousand

killed, 134.5 thousand wounded. **[307]** Total: 457 thousand killed and wounded only at the stage of preparation, capturing the starting lines for a large-scale offensive.

By mid-June 1944, an unprecedented number of troops was created to carry out Operation Bagration: four fronts (1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian), 156 rifle and 12 cavalry divisions, 12 tank and mechanized corps, 16 separate tank brigades; a total of about 178 "calculated divisions" [109]. As well as 4 infantry divisions, a cavalry and a tank brigade of the Polish Army. And already during the beginning of the offensive, an additional 24 rifle divisions were introduced. The group was armed with 4,000 tanks and self-propelled guns. From the air, the offensive was supported by aviation in the amount of 2,500 fighters, 1,800 attack aircraft, and 1,000 bombers. The enemy (GA "Center" as part of the 3rd Tank, 4th, 9th and 2nd Armies) on the front

from the Western Dvina to Pripyat had 30 infantry, 1 tank, 4 motorized ("panzer-grenadier") divisions. And also 2 so-called "airfield divisions", 2 security divisions, 2 cavalry brigades, 3 "corps battle groups", which can be reduced to about 7 "calculated divisions". Later, after the start of the offensive of the Red Army, 2 tank divisions were transferred to Belarus. Even taking into account the four Hungarian divisions included in the 2nd Wehrmacht Army, the enemy does not even have 50 divisions. By the beginning of the operation, the Germans had about 500 tanks, the aviation group consisted of about 300 bombers and 160 fighters. Thus, by the beginning of Operation Bagration, the Red Army outnumbered the enemy by 4 times in the number of divisions, 8 times in tanks, with

absolute superiority in aviation. In this case, absolute numbers are also essential. The grouping of Soviet troops numbered more than 2.3 million people, such a concentration of "manpower" made it possible to carry out sapper work on an unprecedented scale; so, for example, on the first day of the offensive on the Pronya River (an eastern tributary of the Dnieper), 78 crossings and 4 bridges with a carrying capacity of 60 tons were built, in impassable swamps for tens of kilometers paved gati capable of withstanding a tank, etc. And this is not all composition of the group of Soviet troops. In the rear of the GA "Center" there was and actively operated

a huge partisan "army". Even according to modern documentary estimates, cleared of the propaganda exaggerations of the Soviet era, by the summer of 1944 more than 130 thousand armed partisans were operating in Belarus. In one night before the start of the offensive, the partisans committed several thousand acts of sabotage, destroying, in particular, 40,000 rails, which almost completely paralyzed rail traffic in the rear of the GA "Center". [308] And later on, throughout the operation, the partisan detachments

successfully interacted with units of the regular army, supplied them with intelligence, destroyed the transport system and communication lines behind enemy lines.

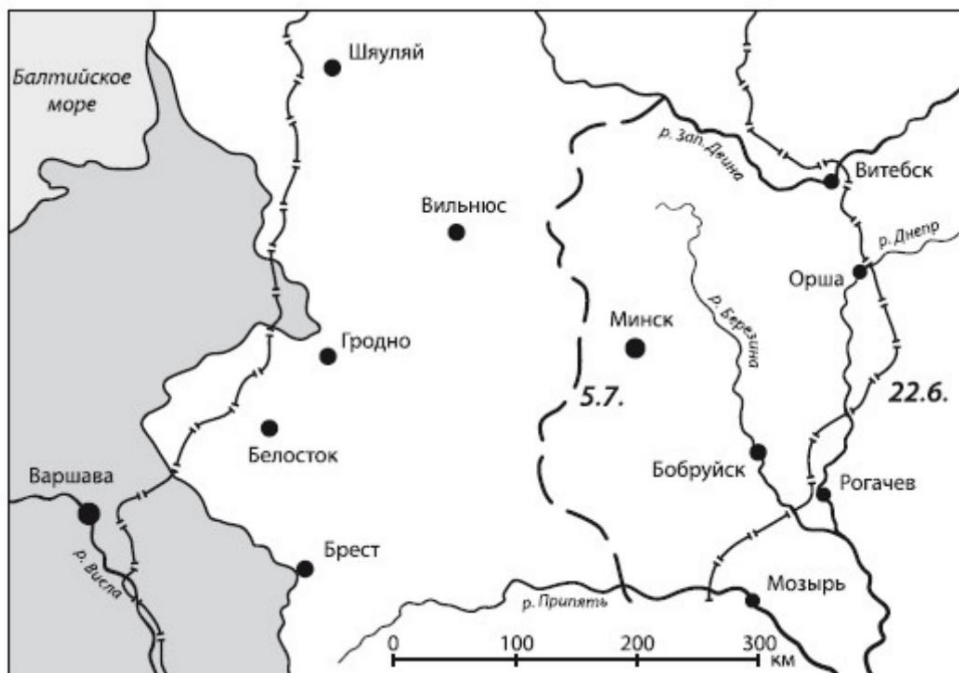
Important circumstances of the time of action should also be noted. The end of June 1944 was on the calendar. The Wehrmacht had already suffered a series of heavy defeats and was retreating on all fronts, the Allies had already landed in Normandy, and the Germans were no longer able to throw them into the sea, more than 500 kilotons of bombs had already hit German cities. The final outcome of the war was no longer in doubt among any sane person, and on July 20 (in the midst of Operation Bagration), a bomb brought by conspiring officers exploded under Hitler's table. And if the generals in Berlin were already ready to risk their lives to overthrow the Nazi regime, then the soldiers on the Eastern Front were less and less willing to pay with their only lives for prolonging the agony of the "Third Reich".

In this situation, the operation "Bagration" developed as follows. (Fig. 22.) At the first stage (from June 23 to July 5), the enemy's defense front was broken through in the area of Vitebsk and Bobruisk, the mobile formations of the Red Army launched a rapid offensive, covering about 200 km in 12 days. At the same time, in the region of Vitebsk, Bobruisk and east of Minsk, three local "cauldrons" were created, in which more than 130 thousand enemy troops were surrounded and destroyed. The units of the Wehrmacht that had escaped encirclement retreated to the west under the non-stop attacks of Soviet aircraft; the surviving photographs of the destroyed columns are indistinguishable from similar pictures of the summer of 1941.

At the second stage of the operation (approximately from July 5 to July 30), the Red Army continued the offensive, albeit at a somewhat slower pace, while the enemy managed to withdraw the remnants of the troops in a relatively organized manner, avoiding new "cauldrons". By the end of July, the line of greatest advance of the Soviet troops approximately coincided with the border of 1941: in the Baltic states, the front went west of Siauliai, and in a number of places the advanced units reached the coast of the Baltic Sea, to the south the front passed through Suwalki and further along the river. Biebrza west of Bialystok. On the Brest direction, formations of the 1st Belorussian Front, advancing south of the Polesie swamps, reached Warsaw and even captured bridgeheads

on the western bank of the Vistula. Strictly speaking, this was the end of the offensive operation, although in Soviet historiography its completion was invariably dated August 29 [110]. In fact, during August, the troops of the Red Army did not have any noticeable advance, moreover, in the Baltic states, the Germans man

counterattack, push the advanced units of the 1st Baltic Front back to Siauliai and thus restore land communications with the Sever GA.



Rice. 22. Operation "Bagration" (summer 1944)

Let's summarize. In 40 days of the offensive (or in 68 days of the operation, if we accept the official version), the Red Army troops advanced 500–550 km. Enemy losses (killed, wounded, missing) amounted to about 350-400 thousand people, which - taking into account the initial number of GA "Center" - can only be described as a complete rout. The cost of victory: 178.5 thousand killed, 587.3 thousand wounded, total 765.8 thousand people. **The losses of the personnel of the attackers were twice the losses of the defenders.** The loss of military equipment of the Red Army amounted to 2957 tanks, 2447 guns and mortars, 822 aircraft. [309] Even without questioning the reliability of the above, quite official data, it can be argued that the losses of the Red Army were not limited to these figures. Time has been lost. August, September, October, November, December - Soviet troops stood still for five long months before they were able to resume the offensive from the Vistula to the Oder and further to Berlin on January 12, 1945. Yes, of course, the political factor also played a role here (Stalin patiently waited until the Germans drowned the Warsaw Uprising in blood), but at the end of September the uprising was finally crushed, but the front did not budge; for many months the Soviet troops stood on the defensive and on hundreds of kilometers of the front

north of Warsaw. Apparently, it should be recognized that after the prohibitive tension of the Bagration operation, the Red Army needed a long respite to recuperate.

And now let's return to the events of the summer of 1941. The scene is the same, the weather and climate conditions, the length of the day and the depth of the swamps are unchanged. Another component of the similarity of "Bagration" and "Barbarossa" is the size of the group of defenders. As part of the troops of the Western Front and the left (southern) flank of the North-Western Front, which was under attack by the GA "Center", there were only 47 "estimated divisions" (26 rifle, 2 cavalry, 13 tank and 6 motorized divisions, 1 airborne corps and 3 anti-tank brigades), which is almost exactly equal to the number of German and Hungarian troops at the start of Operation Bagration.

Then the growing differences begin. The defenders have a powerful armored "fist" - more than 2.2 thousand serviceable (!) Tanks, including 430 of the latest KV and T-34, and more than 0.5 thousand BA-10 cannon armored vehicles; this is a fundamentally different - in comparison with the German GA "Center" in the summer of 1944 - the level of weapons, theoretically allowing to deliver crushing counterattacks, break the plans of the enemy and impose "his own game" on him. On the side of the "eastern" there is a large aviation grouping, which includes 1634 combat aircraft (881 fighters and 753 bombers) [111]. Such a "cloud" of combat aircraft significantly changes the situation - there is something to cover our own troops from the air, there is something to attack enemy motorized columns moving along the forest "gorge roads". The main difference between "Bagration" and "Barbarossa" is

revealed when getting acquainted with the composition of the advancing group - here we are transferred from the country of giants to the country of midgets. The German generals could not even dream of three-digit numbers in the number of divisions. The entire Army Group Center (yes, the most powerful in the invasion forces) consisted of only 49 "calculated divisions" (31 infantry, 1 cavalry, 9 tank, 6 motorized, 3 security divisions, 1 motorized brigade and 1 motorized regiment). Approximate equality of forces with the grouping of the Red Army. If we compare with the "Bagration", then four times less than the attacking side had in the summer of 1944.

In service with 9 German tank divisions there were (not counting machine-gun tankettes) 1.7 thousand tanks; taking into account 6 divisions and 2 batteries of "assault guns", 4 divisions of self-propelled "tank destroyers" and 2 battalions of flamethrower tanks, only about 2 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns are recruited. Slightly less than the defenders, or half as much as it was

Red Army in Operation Bagration. From the air, GA "Center" supported the 2nd Air Fleet, which was armed with (including faulty!) 1145 combat aircraft (400 fighters, 568 bombers, 177 multi-purpose Me-110). One and a half times less than the defenders, or 4.6 times less than the attacking side had in Operation Bagration. Now, for convenience, let's reduce all this variety of numbers into two simple tables:

Table 13

	вермахт	Красная Армия	k=
всего дивизий	49	47	1,04
в т.ч. пехотных	33	28	1,18
танки и САУ, тыс.	2,0	2,2	0,91
боевые самолеты	1,15	1,63	0,71

Table 14

	Красная Армия	вермахт	k=
всего дивизий	207	48	4,3
в т.ч. пехотных	190	41	4,6
танки и САУ, тыс.	4,0	0,5	8,0
боевые самолеты, тыс.	5,3	0,46	11,5

Note: the category "infantry" also includes rifle, cavalry and guard divisions.

Here it should also be noted that Table 13 does not reflect the most important fact that already in early July, east of the Berezina, the Germans met with numerous, fully mobilized divisions of the Second Strategic Echelon, in particular, with formations of the 5th and 7th mechanized corps, which had on armed with more than 1.5 thousand tanks.

The general conclusion is beyond doubt: within the framework of that military science, which considers divisions, calibers, kilotons of bombs and millimeters of armor, the Wehrmacht in the summer of 41 had little chance of conducting a successful offensive operation, and even to a great depth; taking into account the properties of the terrain, the presence of numerous river barriers and two lines of fortified areas, the chances became simply zero. But the reality turned out to

be quite different. The Germans reached the line of Vitebsk, Orsha, the Dnieper River by July 10, 1941. At some points they reached even earlier, but along the entire length of the named line, the Wehrmacht was on the 20th day of the operation. The pace is two times higher than in the operation "Bagration" (and this is if you consider it hard, limiting the duration of the offensive operation of the Red Army on August 1, 1944).

No one knows for sure the losses of the defenders (of the Western Front of the Red Army). Krivosheev's statistical collection estimates the total losses of the Western Front (of course, without taking into account the three divisions of the North-Western Front destroyed in the strip from the border to Vilnius) at 418 thousand people. Taking into account that two-thirds of the formations of the Polar Front remained in the "boiler", and the divisions that emerged from the encirclement totaled 1-2 thousand people at best, the real estimate of losses - we will consider this issue in more detail at the end of this Part of the book - should be increased to 500 - 550 thousand people. Which is much more, but in principle comparable to the irretrievable German losses in Operation Bagration.

Absolutely, strikingly disparate were the losses of the attackers. By July 10, 1941, the total losses (killed, wounded, missing) of the GA "Center" amounted to about 24-26 thousand people. **30 times less than the losses of the Red Army in Operation Bagration**. German losses amounted to about 2.5% of the initial number of personnel of the GA Center, so it is not surprising that the Wehrmacht did not need five months, five weeks, or even five days of operational pause. On June 29, tank divisions closed the encirclement near Minsk, on July 3 the offensive to the east was resumed, on July 10 Vitebsk was occupied and the crossing of the Dnieper began, on July 16 the Germans occupied Smolensk ...

Sapienti sat. "The clever one is enough," as the ancient Latins used to say. In this case, even a not very smart person should understand that such a stunning difference in the proportions of losses cannot be the result of poor operation of the air filter on the T-34 engine or the outdated design of armored shutters on the pillboxes of the Minsk UR. Even the tactical advantages of the first strike, which Stalin gave the enemy, cannot explain such a rout, at such a pace and with such meager losses of the winner. The reason for the defeat was much more serious, and to the reader, who has gained the difficulty and patience to read up to this point in the book, everything should already be extremely clear. However, the title of the book obliges, and therefore we proceed to a detailed analysis of the short history of the death of the Western Front. **Plans for the invasion** The strategic

decision taken by

the High Command of the Wehrmacht - to strike the main blow on the central sector of the Eastern Front, through Belarus to Smolensk - was very risky and controversial. As for the method of implementing such a solution, it - at least at the stage of the first operations - was quite trivial and predictable. Outline of the border (protruding far to the west

“Bialystok ledge”), the terrain features and the available road network suggested an obvious plan of action for the German troops: delivering two powerful strikes with mobile formations at the base of the “ledge”, followed by the advance of one Tank Group across relatively open terrain from Suwalki to Vilnius, and the other along the main highway from Brest to Baranovichi. After that, a large set of options for further

actions opened up. The Soviet command, as can be judged from the content of the Western OVO cover plan, assumed that the enemy would strike in the directions of Suwalki - Lida, Suwalki - Bialystok, Siedlce - Belsk, Brest - Baranovichi; in other words, an attempt was expected to encircle the troops of the Western Front on the territory of the “ledge” or somewhat to the east, to the line of Lida, Novogrudok, Baranovichi. It is noteworthy that the intention to act with such caution and restraint also arose from the High Command of the Wehrmacht, and already during the offensive that had begun. On June 25, 1941, Field Marshal Bock, commander of the GA “Center”, writes in his diary:

“The Fuhrer is interested in how large the encirclement zone near Minsk will be, and also expresses concern about whether our overextended troops will be able to force the large Russian forces that are surrounded to surrender. In this regard, the Führer wonders if, in order to avoid failure, our tank pincers should not be closed near Novogrudok . [311]

On the contrary, the command of the Army Group Center and the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht repeatedly and persistently proposed to act much more decisively, with the development of the offensive of the 3rd TGr through Vilnius to Polotsk and Vitebsk (see Fig. 10). This option made it possible to bypass the impenetrable massif of forests in the upper reaches of the river. Berezina and further “rake” into the encirclement the entire grouping of Soviet troops located to the west of the Dnieper. However, the High Command rejected these proposals as adventurous and decided to “confine itself” to the encirclement of the troops of the Western Front with the closing of “tank wedges” in the Minsk region. However, even in this case, the tank divisions had to travel about 350 km (and this is much more in a straight line, taking into account the actual length of the roads and combat maneuvering), and if the northern wing (3rd Panzer Group) could move along a relatively open lane terrain, then the southern flank (2nd Panzer Group) had to pass through tens of kilometers of swampy forest north of

Pripyat. Ultimately, everything turned out to be even more complicated: the tank corps met near Minsk, the infantry divisions closed the “small ring”

encirclement 50-70 km west of Baranovichi, in the interfluvium of the Zelvyanka and Shchara rivers, and one of the three (24th) tank corps of the 2nd TGr through Slutsk went to Bobruisk and further to Rogachev on the Dnieper; By the end of June, the formations of the GA "Center" turned out to be bizarrely scattered over a vast territory, while the distances between the corps of the same Army could reach hundreds of kilometers, and the separation of mobile formations from the infantry was about 150-200 km. If you superimpose the operational map of those days on the map of Western Europe, it turns out that the

infantry and tanks fought in different countries ... The operational formation of the grouping was quite traditional for the Wehrmacht: a decisive massing of forces in the direction of the main attack, the concentration of most of the troops in the first echelon with minimal reserves (see fig. 11). On a narrow patch of the "Suwalk ledge" 9 infantry divisions, consolidated into four corps of the 9th Army, and 7 divisions (four tank and three motorized) of the 3rd Tank Group gathered together. In the Brest direction, at the southern base of the "Bialystok ledge", the most powerful in the entire Wehrmacht grouping on the Eastern Front was concentrated, the 2nd Panzer Group (five tank, three motorized divisions and a separate motorized regiment), 6 infantry and 1 cavalry division; at the stage of breaking through the border fortifications, this entire huge mass of troops was operationally subordinated to the commander of the 2nd TGr. Field Marshal Bock is skeptical

about this: ***"Guderian is pleased: now under his command are parts of 15 different divisions! In addition, large masses of infantry are concentrated on its front, which, if the situation develops unfavorably, can lead to large and unjustified losses. [311]*** The

Germans managed to avoid heavy and unjustified losses (with the only exception created by the defenders of the Brest Fortress), but the concentration of infantry on the southern bypass of the "ledge" probably went beyond reasonable limits - 10 infantry divisions were allocated to the holding group. Later - and this is clearly seen on the operational maps of the German General Staff - such a formation led to the fact that the infantry units moved along the narrow passages between the forests "in the back of the head" one after another, not having contact with the enemy, gradually turning into a chaotic crowd of people and military equipment. (Fig. 23.) The decision to put tank

divisions (seven out of nine available) in the first echelon of the offensive was also not quite traditional; as we already know, the command of the GA "South" acted more prudently, and the breakthrough of the border fortifications everywhere was carried out by infantry

divisions; tank divisions were introduced there into the already created breakthrough, and sequentially, one after another.

Of course, each of these two tactics has its advantages and disadvantages; the choice was often determined by the subjective, personal priorities of senior commanders. Guderian, as far as can be judged from his memoirs, adamantly adhered to the opinion that the striking power of tank formations could and should be used already in the very first strike. As for the situation in the 3rd TGr zone, the Germans didn't have much choice there. Alytus and Merkinė had about 40-60 km from the border to the bridges across the Neman, the infantry would not be able to cover so much in one day; accordingly, it was necessary either to throw mobile formations into the offensive, or to put up with the fact that the enemy (the Red Army) would have time to blow up the bridges and prepare for defense on the eastern bank of the river. Another characteristic feature of the GA "Center" was the inclusion of

an unusually large number of heavy artillery units in its composition: 25 separate divisions armed with 210-mm howitzers or even more powerful artillery systems (for comparison, we note that in the GA "Sever" there were only 7 such divisions, in GA "South" - 13). It can be assumed that the Wehrmacht command expected to meet stubborn resistance from the fortified areas of the Molotov Line and was preparing to crush pillboxes according to all the rules of military science and technology of that time. As is known today, in most cases these preparations turned out to be unnecessary, but where the Germans had to break through in battle (near Brest, Semyatyche, Grodno), the presence of heavy guns turned out to be critical for them.

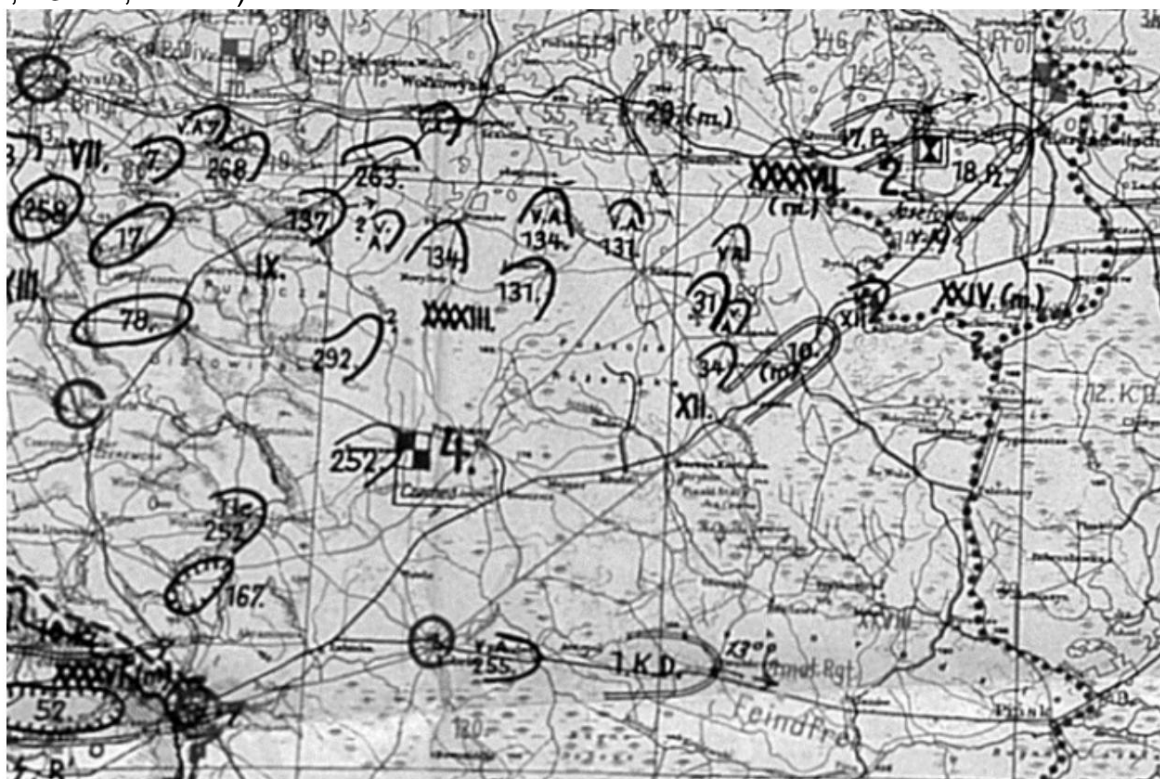
Condition of the troops of the Western Front The main problem (here it would be quite appropriate to say "disaster") of the Western Front - as well as its

neighbors in the north and south - was

the chaotic dispersion of the front's formations over a vast area. In the same way as in the zone of the Kyiv OVO (South-Western Front), by the morning of June 22, neither the planned offensive nor the improvised defensive grouping of troops was built in the west of Belarus. And in this direction, Stalin's loss in the mysterious "big game" had to be paid with a lot of blood. It is purely conditional to name four "echelons" (in this context, this word can only be used in quotation marks), in which the beginning of the war found the troops of the Western Front. A chain of rifle divisions stretched along the border: three

divisions of the 3rd Army near Grodno, Avgustov, five divisions and a cavalry corps of the 10th Army at the tip of the "Bialystok ledge", four divisions of the 4th Army at the southern base of the "ledge". (cm.

rice. eleven). Behind the line of rifle divisions, at a distance of 20-100 km from the border, there were tank and motorized divisions of four mechanized corps (11 MK, 6 MK, 13 MK, 14 MK).



Rice. 23. Operational map of the German General Staff, June 26, 1941

The southern flank of the Northwestern Front, from Prienai to Druskininkai, was also in the offensive zone of the GA "Center". In this area, near the border, there was one rifle division (128th rifle division) and a rifle regiment of the 126th rifle division, the rest of this division was to the east, near the Neman River. Behind the Neman, in the area of Alytus, the 5th Panzer Division (3 MK) was stationed. Strictly speaking, there were three more divisions, but two "Lithuanian divisions" (179th Rifle Division and 184th Rifle Division) had, at best, zero value, and from the very first hours of the war they tried to withdraw them to the rear; The 84th motorized division (3 MK) allegedly took up defensive positions on the eastern bank of the Neman near Kaunas, but neither the Germans nor the Lithuanian armed nationalists, who took the city into their own hands already on June 23, did not notice this "defense".

Rifle divisions directly subordinated to the command of the Western OVO, on June 11, began advancing to the west in accordance with the well-known directives of the People's Commissar of Defense (***"to withdraw all deep rifle divisions and directorates of rifle corps with corps units to the camp in the areas provided for by the cover plan ... the withdrawal of these troops finish by July 1, 1941"***). [132] You Can Move Out

differently; in this case, the task of ensuring secrecy was in the first place. Things got to the point that ***“no written orders and instructions were given to the corps and divisions; division commanders received instructions orally from the chief of staff of the district, Major General Klimovsky, the personnel were explained that they were going to big exercises, the troops took with them all the training equipment (devices, targets, etc.)” [112] . [312]*** Moving in short night marches along winding forest roads, “with instruments and targets”, eight rifle divisions of the 21st SC and 47 SC by the morning of June 22 were still at a distance of 150-250 km from the border (in the strip, respectively, Lida, Molodechno and Ivantsevichi, Slutsk). Between them, in the 100-kilometer strip from Ilye to Nesvizh, three divisions of the 17th mechanized corps

were scattered. Finally, the “fourth echelon” can be conditionally called four rifle divisions in the Minsk, Borisov region, there were also three divisions of the emerging 20th mechanized corps (it is no longer possible to depict this in the diagram in Fig. 11).

The dispersion of troops to a great depth (up to 300-350 km) was aggravated by the absence of any meaningful distribution of forces in the first “echelon”. Rifle divisions were stretched almost in an even chain along the entire border, no concentration of forces on easily predictable directions of a possible enemy strike (at the bases of the “ledge”) is visible. Moreover, out of the four rifle divisions of the 4th Army, two (6th rifle division and 42nd rifle division) were stationed in Brest, at a distance of a mortar shot from the border, and one of the three (22nd tank) divisions of the 14th MK was also there. Placing the barracks of a tank division near the border pillars is not even preparation for an offensive, it is simply beyond absurdity. In the situation of a sudden first strike by the enemy, all three divisions came under a flurry of artillery fire and suffered significant losses without having time to fire a single shot.

Three anti-tank brigades that were part of the troops of the district, on the eve of the war, were located near the city of Lida, in Ruzhanystok (settlement 28 km west of Grodno) and Mikhailovo (settlement 32 km east of Bialystok). If you connect these three points on the map with a conditional line, you get an arc curved to the northwest, towards the “Suwalk ledge”. It is not difficult to understand the logic of such an arrangement of anti-tank brigades, bearing in mind that all pre-war plans provided for the possibility of a German offensive from Suwalki in the direction of Grodno or Lida. Unfortunately, these plans were drawn up without any knowledge of the real plans of the enemy, as a result of the three brigades, only one (8th PTABR in the Lida area) could theoretically have time to advance to Vilnius (90 km along

highway) and meet the advancing German tanks there with artillery fire. On the Brest direction, near the highway Brest, Kobrin, Slutsk, in the offensive zone of the most powerful tank grouping of the Wehrmacht, there was not a single PTABr at all! In the

writings of Soviet / Russian historians, any mention of PTABrs is necessarily accompanied by a firm reminder that the brigades were not equipped with weapons and did not have means of mechanized traction, i.e. in this case, the well-known dispute about the "half-empty glass" was resolved radically - the glass was ordered consider it completely empty. Other comrades are not shy about strong expressions: ***"Otherwise, the state of the anti-tank brigades of the ZapOVO cannot be called monstrous ... In fact, their mobility can be described as zero."*** [313] Let's not argue, but just look at this "monstrous state" through the prism of facts. On June 8, 1941, Major General

Semyonov, head of the Operations Department of the Western OVO Headquarters, reports to the Chief of the General Staff Zhukov on the progress of the formation of the PTABRs. [314] With a staff strength of 5,322, the district's three brigades (6th, 7th, and 8th) have, respectively, 5,332, 5,187, and 5,147 personnel. Almost complete set. Yes, guns are about half of the state, but in absolute numbers, these are, respectively, 60, 52 and 54 guns. The guns are as follows: 64 76-mm guns, 84 85-mm anti-aircraft guns and 18 long-range 107-mm guns. Let me remind you that in the Wehrmacht, in a similar role (anti-tank reserve of the command of the corps and armies), a separate anti-tank battalion was used, which was armed with 36 "mallets" of 37 mm caliber. And so far, no one has called their condition "monstrous." It is possible that by the time the war

began, there were even more guns in the PTABRs of the Western OVO; In the same report, General Semyonov reports that by July 1, 72 76-mm and 60 85-mm cannons should be received to equip the PTABRs. As of June 8, the mobility of the brigades was indeed very low (only 4 tracked tractors in the 6th and 7 tractors in the 8th brigades). However, on this date, not everything was so "monstrous", because any (!) Truck could be used to tow 76-mm guns weighing one and a half tons. Moreover, from 8 to 22 June, a lot has changed. Something has changed both in the

expanses of the former USSR, and in 2007 in Minsk in a huge circulation of 300 copies. a collection of pre-war documents was released, among which, in particular, was the full text of the memorandum that the former Private Military Forces of the Western Front, the Fomins, filed on July 19, 1941 in the name of the head

GlavPUR Mekhlis. It turns out that in place of the ellipsis, which flaunted in previous publications of the document, the following was written:

“And only recently, at our request, was it allowed to take tractors from rifle divisions, and transfer the artillery of rifle divisions to horse traction (where tractors were taken). The conversion of tractors from rifle divisions took place in the month of June in the most energetic order, and by the beginning of the war, the ATGMs were mostly equipped with tractors (emphasis added by me. - **M.S.)** ". [103]

The combat composition of the tank troops of the front can be described with the words "6th mechanized corps and all the rest." The most powerful 6th mechanized corps in terms of the number of tanks of "new types" (114 KV and 238 T-34) was inferior to only 4 MK (Kiev OVO), and according to many other criteria (the total number of tanks, vehicles, motorcycles) ranked first in the entire Red Army. Tanks in the 6th MK were almost the same as in the other five mechanized corps of the Western Front, and in terms of the number of cars, tractors, light armored vehicles BA-20, motorcycles, the 6th mechanized corps surpassed them combined. The "old" 5th Panzer Division (3rd mechanized corps, Baltic OVO) was also a very powerful formation. The remaining five mechanized corps

were also clearly divided into two groups: limited combat-ready, armed with from three to five hundred tanks 11 MK, 13 MK and 14 MK, as well as two formations (17 MK and 20 MK), which were mechanized corps only in name. The main quantitative parameters are presented in Table 16:

Table 16

	6 МК	11 МК	13 МК	14 МК	5 тд
всего танков	968	376	281	510	255
в т.ч. КВ и Т-34	352	31	0	0	50
броневые автомобили БА-10	135	91	28	21	56
автомобили	4506	919	1312	1361	1154
трактора и тягачи	284	57	117	99	62

Note: amphibious tanks are not taken into account, only serviceable tanks are shown for the 5th TD.

For the sake of truth, it should be noted that there are documents (reports, certificates, reports of the GABTU KA), which indicate a significantly larger number of "new types" tanks. [322] So, as of June 22

1941 in the armored forces of the "western direction" (it is difficult to say unequivocally - what this term can mean in relation to June 22, most likely 5 MK and 7 MK, who took part in the battle of Senno, Lepel in early July) were included in the general list there were 210 KV and 422 T-34s. In any case, there is no doubt that the military factories of the "peacefully sleeping" country worked from dawn to dawn, echelons with new tanks went west, and in June 41, it was ZapOVO that became the main recipient of T-34 tanks.

The meager number of tanks in the 17th and 20th mechanized corps (56 and 94, respectively) does not mean at all that the combat potential of these formations was close to zero. To begin with, we note that such a "meager amount" roughly corresponds to the number of combat-ready tanks remaining in the divisions of the 1st Wehrmacht TGr by mid-July 1941; while no one has ever declared them non-existent. The second (and most important) is that the word "mechanized" is just an adjective for the noun "corps". Even the corps, which did not receive tanks and the number of vehicles required by the state, consists of three divisions, tens of thousands of people, hundreds of gun barrels and mortars. It is worth dwelling on the number of "trunks" in a little more detail. In mid-May (the corresponding directive of the

General Staff was sent to the Western OVO on May 16, 1941), it was decided to arm the tank regiments of the emerging tank divisions with guns, "***so that if necessary they could fight as anti-tank regiments and divisions***". At the same time, it was noted that the tactical methods of firing direct fire from 45-mm and 76-mm tank and conventional (towed) guns are in many ways similar, and the preparation of gun crews from the personnel of tank regiments should not take much time. For 17 MK, it was planned to receive 168 freelance guns (96 76 mm caliber guns and 72 45 mm caliber guns), for 20 MK 210 guns were loaded (120 76 mm caliber guns and 90 45 mm caliber guns). To tow these "trunks", the hulls were to additionally receive, respectively, 208 and 260 trucks. [315]

The decision was made in mid-May, the deadline was set for July 1. The materiel necessary to carry out the directive was available and in abundance [113]. Unfortunately, I was not able to find out in specific numbers how this directive was implemented, but even if the 17th and 20th mechanized corps managed to receive at least half (or even a third) of the number of guns named above by June 22, this already turned them into a full-fledged anti-tank artillery brigade, and even reinforced by a battalion of tanks and several regiments of infantry. Strength, theoretically quite

enough to block several "road directions" among the forests and swamps of Belarus.

The legitimacy of using the term "encirclement" in relation to the history of the defeat of the Western Front also needs serious clarification. Strictly speaking, the fact that the front line is depicted on the map as a closed curve is not yet sufficient reason to assess the situation as some kind of special "force majeure". Encirclement (we are not talking here about a platoon of reconnaissance officers surrounded in a forest clearing that can be shot through at any point) differs from "non-encirclement" primarily in that the encircled group is deprived of the opportunity to receive material resources from the rear and, having used up the available stocks of ammunition, fuel and food, loses ability to resist. A classic example of this is the encirclement of the 6th

German Army near Stalingrad. By definition, the Germans could not have warehouses created in advance near the Volga, the supply of the army before its encirclement went "from the wheels" and it was not possible to accumulate significant reserves in such a situation; severe winter and deserted steppe made it impossible to use local resources to provide those surrounded with food and fuel. Is this situation comparable to what happened in Belarus in the summer of 1941? The "encirclement" of the Western Front took place on an area of several European countries, among numerous warehouses with fuel and ammunition. On the eve of the war, gigantic deposits of materiel for warfare were accumulated in the western border districts, these stocks were designed to ensure combat operations not only for the troops of the border districts (future fronts), but also for formations of the Second Strategic Echelon, and not for one week. ***"I will read out a very small reference."***

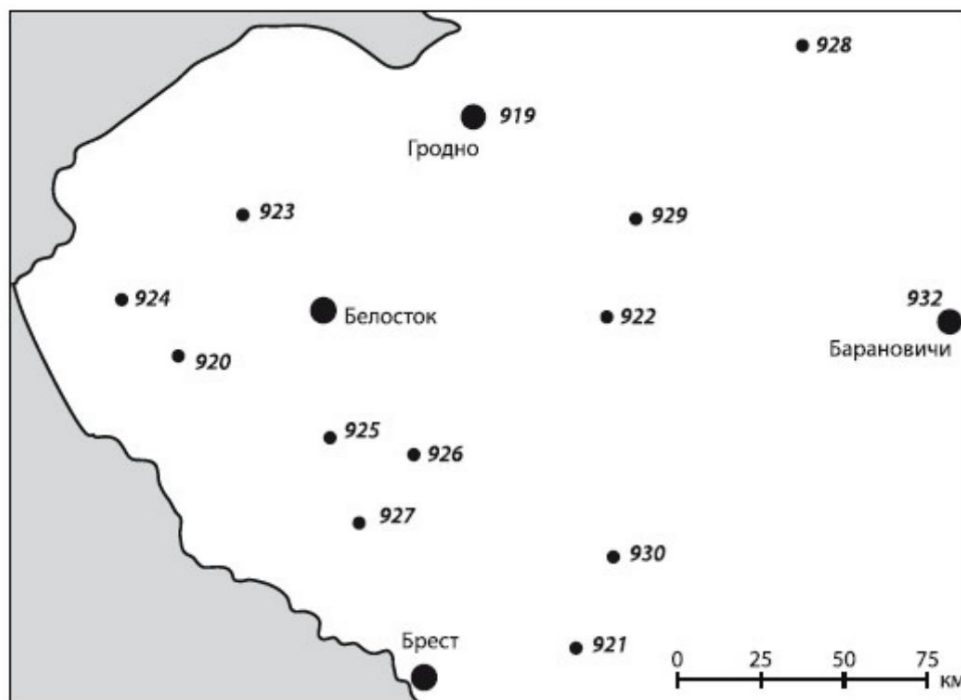
In total, in order to provide combat vehicles (I exclude completely wheeled vehicles) for a 500 km march, 1200 tons of fuel are needed for refueling. This is a phrase from the report with which the commander of the Western OVO (and before that - the head of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army), General Pavlov, spoke at the December (1940) Meeting of the top command staff of the Red Army. It was about providing fuel to a fully equipped mechanized corps according to standard standards. Everything that really was part of the Western Front in June of the 41st can be reduced to about two "calculated mechanized corps", and 500 km of the march is the absolute maximum of what tank units could and should have gone through during the "encircled" battles on the territory of Western Belarus. Thus, the total fuel requirement for the tank units of the front can be determined at 2.5 thousand tons, taking into account

wheeled vehicles - 5 thousand tons. Is it a lot? Was it fuel in kind? ***“According to the fuel***

department. In total, there were 25 warehouses on the territory occupied by the enemy. The warehouses had 33 thousand tons of gasoline of the 1st grade, 8 thousand tons of gasoline of the 2nd grade, 5 thousand tons of diesel fuel ... It was established that the fuel and lubricants warehouse in Molodechno fell into the hands of the enemy with the amount of gasoline of the 1st grade - 2438 tons , 2nd grade - 947 tons, diesel fuel - 301 tons and various oils - 200 tons ... The head of the Bobruisk fuel and lubricants warehouse, Avdeev, reported that the fuel and lubricants warehouse was destroyed. In fact, the fuel and lubricants warehouse of about 900 tons of gasoline went to the enemy, and only our aircraft was set on fire ... In Borisov, there were 1 thousand tons of gasoline in the warehouse; the valves of the tanks were opened when the enemy appeared at the location of the warehouse. Gasoline was not set on fire, it is impossible to establish whether all the gasoline wa

And so on for many pages. Gasoline was poured out, burned, warehouses were bombed by their own aircraft ... Even with such efforts, the enemy (as the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces F. Halder writes about this in his diary) covered a third of his gasoline consumption with trophies. To the west of Minsk there were 16 fuel depots, including a huge warehouse No. 932 in Baranovichi with capacities for 5 thousand tons of fuel. (Fig. 24.) The schematic map clearly shows that from any point in Western Belarus it was no more than 50–60 km to the nearest fuel depot. In the strip of Grodno, Bialystok, Brest (and there were all four combat-ready mechanized corps), the warehouses are even denser. At the same time, one should not forget that the fuel tanks of military and transport vehicles themselves are a large "storage" of gasoline, and there were actually two or three fuel stations directly in the tank units of the district. The situation of combat in an environment requires mechanized units to shoot more than drive (after all, a tank that has run out of gasoline to the last

drop can be used as a fixed firing point). The ammunition load of the mechanized corps is 100 wagons (the figure was named at the December Meeting mentioned above). For two "calculated mechanized corps" you need, respectively, 200 wagons. On the eve of the war, 6,700 wagons of ammunition were concentrated in the district warehouses of the Western OVO, of which 2,000 wagons were in 10 warehouses that ended up in the territory occupied by the enemy by June 29. [317] For a better understanding of these "carriage figures", we note that in 1943 the entire Red Army, along the entire vast (at that time - more than 2 thousand km) stretch of the Soviet German front, consumed an average of 5638 cars per month. [3]



Rice. 24. Warehouses of fuel and lubricants on the territory of the "Bialystok ledge"

Turning from wagons to the usual units of measurement, let us turn to the telegram, which is sent to the headquarters of the Western Front on the evening of June 24 by the deputy. Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Sokolovsky. The General Staff reminds the front command that as of June 20, the district / front had 610 thousand rounds for 76-mm regimental guns and 690 thousand rounds for 76-mm divisions, 720 thousand rounds for 122-mm howitzers, 480,000 rounds for 76-mm anti-aircraft guns and 3,604,000 rounds for 45-mm guns (and this is not only anti-tank artillery of rifle divisions, but also the armament of 2,000 tanks and armored vehicles). **[318]** There is no data on 152-mm howitzer rounds in the telegram, but conventionally taking the resources of the Western Front as one-fifth of the total reserves of the five border districts, we get about 560,000 more rounds. **[3]**

When looking at these figures, the question inevitably arises - who surrounded whom? Those who had 7–12 rounds of ammunition per barrel accumulated in stationary warehouses, or an advancing army that had gone hundreds of kilometers deep into enemy territory, temporarily unable to deliver shells by rail (different gauge), with one, maximum two rounds of shells on trucks and in limbers of guns?

The size of the "environment ring" is also important. The outer contour of the eastern "boiler" (in the Novogrudok strip, Minsk) had a length of about 400 km. To build a sustainable defense

a front of such length, according to Soviet regulations (PU-39), required at least 200 rifle (infantry) battalions. At the same time, the Germans, in the composition of six tank divisions [114], arithmetically, there were only 30 infantry battalions. Even taking into account the 6–8 motorized and infantry divisions that formed the western perimeter of the “encirclement ring” at the end of June, the enemy had a total of no more than 80–100 infantry battalions. To create with such forces something similar to the double front of the encirclement, which was created in November 42 around the 6th Wehrmacht Army near Stalingrad, the Germans could not (strictly speaking, they did not even try).

“Shoot any number of people ...” Summing

up the abstract-theoretical results of all of the above, one could say that the situation for the troops of the Western Front was difficult, but by no means hopeless. Yes, at the bases of the “ledge” the

enemy had an overwhelming numerical superiority, but this superiority still had to be transported through the full-flowing Bug and Neman. Five hundred indestructible concrete “boxes” of bunkers in the Grodno, Osovets, Zambrovsky and Brest fortified areas, concentrated near a few “road directions”, theoretically made it possible to at least slow down the pace of the enemy's offensive. The features of the terrain (huge tracts of forests and swamps, cut through by narrow “gorge roads”) to a large extent “nullified” the very concept of numerical superiority. Finally, the unfavorable balance of forces could be changed by simply casting forces from passive sectors to the area of the emerging breakthrough. 12 rifle divisions of the second echelon of the front existed in reality, and theoretically

they could be quickly transferred to the west, to the natural defensive lines of the Kotra, Neman, Ross, Shchara, Yaselda rivers. At the very least, 35,000 vehicles, including 25,000 trucks, were part of the front's troops even before the start of open mobilization. **[128]** The calculator suggests that the 13th and 14th mechanized corps were armed with 840 tanks and BA-10 cannon armored vehicles. Yes, these were technically obsolete vehicles, but even just burying [115] 840 armored boxes with a 45-mm cannon into the ground could create a powerful anti-tank barrier. The main “argument” of the defenders could be the powerful, almost fully equipped 6th mechanized corps. All three divisions of the corps were

compactly located in the Bialystok area, and from there a concrete highway stretches to Warsaw. On the path of the expected offensive

mechanized corps, in the interfluvium of the Bug and Nareva, the Germans had a single infantry division (258th Infantry Division); there is no science according to which an infantry division, defending on a front of 50 kilometers, can hold back a concentrated attack by a thousand tanks. And in Warsaw there was the headquarters of the GA "Center", the most important logistics bases, a large railway junction. Serious prospects were also opened by the strike of the 6th and 11th mechanized corps in a north-western direction, through the northern contour of the "Bialystok salient"; the enemy had only three infantry divisions there (87th infantry division, 102nd infantry division, 129th infantry division), stretched out on a front of 130 km, and if the offensive was successful, the tank avalanche would reach the flank and rear of the entire Wehrmacht Suwalki group.

You can probably come up with other, no less beautiful "debut ideas", but the reader, who has carefully read the previous hundreds of pages, should understand without lengthy explanations that all this scholasticism has nothing to do with the harsh truth of life. Nothing like the Red Army arr. 1941 could not be done - primarily due to the lack of qualified command personnel capable of bold initiative actions; any difficult tasks for such an army were impossible in principle.

In the protocol of interrogation of Army General Pavlov, the former commander of the Western Front, a phrase is found that contains, at first glance, the only realistic solution to the issue: “ ***My assistant in military educational institutions, Khabarov, was sent to the army with my strict order, if necessary, to shoot any number of people, but to stop the retreat of the 4th Army and ensure that the headquarters of the Army takes control.*** [319] The idea is simple and effective. Military history knows an example when, in the same 1941, on the Soviet-German front, an order of similar content saved an army that was on the verge of imminent defeat. On December 16, on the tenth day of the Red Army counter-offensive near Moscow, when the German troops began to randomly roll back to the west, Hitler issued an order in which he demanded: “Hold the front to the ***last soldier ... Commanders, commanders and officers, personally influencing the troops, do everything possible to force them to hold their ground and offer fanatically stubborn resistance to the enemy.***” [320]

As you know, such a decision - fanatically and stupidly to hold every meter of the front - displeased the top generals of the Wehrmacht and led to a series of high-profile resignations. However, in the end, in the studies and memoirs written after the war, everyone who could live up to that moment agreed that Hitler's decision was the only right one for the situation in December 1941. Yes, ex-boss

Headquarters of the 4th Army of the Wehrmacht, Blumentritt writes: ***“The fanatical order obliging the troops to stand firm in every position and in the most unfavorable conditions was, of course, correct. Hitler instinctively realized that any retreat through snow and ice in a few days would lead to the collapse of the entire front, and then the German army would suffer the same fate as Napoleon's Grand Army ... ”***

The Wehrmacht complied with the order, while, judging by the final result, a very modest number of soldiers had to be shot. Force the Red Army arr. In 1941 it was impossible to "hold our positions with fanatical tenacity" even with such measures. Yes, tough and cruel actions, up to execution on the spot, sometimes allow stopping panic, but what happened to the Red Army in the summer of 1941 goes far beyond the narrow scope of the term “panic” (i.e., spontaneous and short-term psychological affect). And in this sense, one cannot but agree with the unanimous opinion of Soviet historians, who, at every mention of the fate of the Western Front, firmly stated: "The defeat was inevitable."

Chapter 3.2 Vilnius

The first step towards the encirclement and defeat of the Western Front was made in the south of Lithuania, in the zone of the neighboring North-Western Front (Baltic OVO). The size of our book is not infinite, but the strange events that took place in PribOVO on the eve of the war deserve at least a brief mention.

“Bring all units on alert...” Starting from June

18–19 (i.e., in the middle of the calendar year and 3–4 days before the “surprise attack”), operational documents with numbers 1, 2, 3 appear in the PribOVO headquarters... The earliest of the identified documents refers to the 48th Infantry Division. The operational report of the headquarters of the division number 1 reports that ***“following the order, the division began the march from Riga at 23.00 17.6.41 and, having made a night march (30 km), by 9.00 18.6.41 concentrated in the forest southeast of the village. Dalbe”.*** [323] Then the same information (about the concentration by 9.00 on June 18 in the forest near the settlement of Dalbe) is repeated in a document with the eloquent

title “Combat Report” and serial number 2. [324] **Further** (June 19-21) documents with the name “operational summary”, “combat report”, “combat order”, “combat order” and serial numbers 1, 2, 3 go, as they say, “jamb”. Their abundance becomes clear if we take into account that on June 20, Deputy Chief of Staff (...) Major General Trukhin in document No. 01 (document type is not indicated) demanded that army headquarters provide three operational reports a day (12.00 and 17.00). [325] Three operational reports a day is still modest. In the archives of the 28th Panzer Division (12th MK), a piece of paper has been preserved: a document without a name and number, but the time of compilation is indicated specifically: 19.00 June 21, 1941. The content of the document is an instruction to provide four operational reports daily (at 1.30, 5.00, 9.00, 14.00), four reconnaissance reports and three air defense reports. [326] The attentive reader,

I hope, noticed the missing word above - the deputy chief of staff of WHAT was General Trukhin? This is a very interesting question. On June 20–21 (and even further, on June 22 and 23), the words “district” and front are continuously replaced in documents; sometimes in the same document (for example, Intelligence Report No. 01 by 14.00 on 21.6.41) both names are used: “NWF” and “PribOVO”. [327] Very Remarkable

the document ("Instructions on the covert command and control of troops No. 01") was issued at the headquarters of the NWF at 12.00 on June 21. It is interesting not only by serial number 1 in the middle of the year; on top of the letters "SZF" and "FRONT", made, like the entire document, on a typewriter, in brown pencil (perhaps 70 years ago the pencil was red) is written in bold: "OKR". The signature under the document has also been corrected - the chief of staff of the NWF, Lieutenant General Klenov, was "repainted" with the same pencil as the

chief of staff of the ROC. [328] The army cannot live in disorder for a long time, and already at 16.45 on June 21, on behalf of the chief of staff of the North-Western Front, Lieutenant General P. Klenov (in fact, the document was signed by his deputy, Major General F. Trukhin), to all the heads of departments of the headquarters and the district administrations, the following order was announced against receipt: **"Some headquarters of the units and departments of the district administration in documents and conversations use the words "FRONT", SZF, etc., which divulge the place and presence of the front administration. Immediately stop this phenomenon and continue to call the headquarters and management PribOVO.** [329] That is, everyone (if we talk about senior officers) perfectly understood the meaning and significance of the fact of deployment on the basis of the front district; it was clear to everyone - what this meant, what would

follow, and why such a secret could not be trusted even on paper marked "owls. secret", hidden in a steel safe. However, what can we say about the operational documents of the higher headquarters, if the head of the political propaganda department of the district / front is a brigade commissar. On June 21, Ryabchiy ordered: **"The political propaganda departments of the corps and**

divisions should not be given written directives in part; set the tasks of political work orally through their representatives. [330] No less interesting is the content of the June 18–21 documents. signs

Let's start with the main thing, with the district command. On June 18, the commander of the PribOVO, Colonel-General Kuznetsov, issued a multi-page Order No. 00229. It began very eloquently: **"In order to quickly put the theater of operations**

"... To the head of the air defense zone by the end of June 19, 1941 (hereinafter it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) to bring the entire air defense of the district to full combat readiness ... By 19.6.41, report the order of cover from dive bombers of large railway and earth bridges, artillery depots and critical facilities.

Until 21.6.41, together with the local air defense, organize the blackout of the cities of Riga, Kaunas, Vilnius, Dvinsk, Mitava, Libava, Siauliai, firefighting in them ... Create mobile mine anti-tank combat units in the Telsiai, Siauliai, Kaunas and Kalvarii directions. For this purpose, to have stocks of anti-tank mines transported by road. The readiness of the detachments on 21.6.41 The plan for the destruction of bridges was approved by the Military Councils of the armies. Completion date 21.6.41...." [331] On

the same eventful day of June 18, the commander of the 12th MK, Major General Shestopalov, signs order No. 0033. The document is stamped "Top Secret. Of particular importance", which is not typical for corps-level documents. The order begins with these words: ***"With the receipt of this order, put all units on alert. Parts put on alert in accordance with the plans for raising on combat alert, but the alert itself is not declared. To carry out all the work quickly, but without noise, without panic and talkativeness ... Replenish each unit with personnel. Immediately recall the personnel from business trips and remove those who are on various jobs ..."*** Then there is an instruction to begin at 23.00 on June 18 the advance to the areas of concentration, and all the final points of the routes are in the forests. [332] The decision to put parts of the mechanized corps on

alert was not the personal initiative of General Shestopalov. You can be convinced of this by reading the Combat Operations Journal 12 MK ("numbered, laced and sealed with a wax seal on 10.9.41"). The history of the appearance of the order is described there in sufficient detail: ***"At 23.10 16.6*** (this is not a typo, it was June 16), ***a secret package of special importance ("series A") was received from the PribOVO headquarters. The package was opened on the orders of Captain Efimov*** (the headquarters of the corps was in Mitava, and the commander went to Panevezys, to the location of the 202nd mechanized division of the corps; the package of special importance was opened by the assistant chief of the operations department of the corps headquarters. - ***M.S.). 17.6. reported in code to the corps commander, Major General Shestopalov, on receipt of the indicate***

As it should be in the army, following the order of the corps commander on the same day (June 18), an order of a similar content (and in its first paragraphs verbatim rewritten from the order of Shestopalov) was issued in the 28th Panzer Division, which is part of the 12th mechanized corps . The document is notable for the fact that it contains a specific timetable for the advance: all marches are night, from 5 am to 10 pm, parts of the division hide for the day in the forests. [334] The corresponding document in the second tank

division of the 12th mechanized corps (23rd TD) is called "Combat Order No. 1", it was signed at 18-00 on June 18. It is ordered **"to make marches only at night; in the areas of concentration and day camps, carefully disguise and organize all-round security and observation. [335]** The commander of the 144th tank regiment, which was part of the 23rd TD, at 8-30 on June 19, already issues Combat Order No. 2; ordered to **"categorically prohibit all personnel from any kind of movement in the area of concentration" . [336]** At 10 a.m. on June 20, divisions

of the 12th MK, **"having fulfilled order No. 0033, concentrated in the areas indicated by him "** - as reported in the Opersvodka of the headquarters of the corps number two. On the same day , Shestopalov issues a combat order, in which, in particular, he points out the shortcomings identified during the march: **I order: All fighters in any location and sleep (!) Must have a weapon with them. Upon arrival at the place of the car, refuel everything. Restore the full order of camouflage and combat readiness. [337]**

On the evening of June 20, the chief of staff of the 12th MK, Colonel Kalinichenko, sent the chief of staff of the 28th Panzer Division the following order: **" Upon receipt of this, immediately send the head of the 2nd squad to the headquarters of military unit 9443 (12th MK). On hand to have a map on a scale of 100,000 of the region of East Prussia (Memel, Stallupenen, Suwalki).** There is a note on the document: **"Received at 4.35. In. No. 47" . [338]** It should also be clarified here that the 28th TD was hiding in the forests west of Siauliai, and was separated from the Shtallupenen (now Nesterov), Suwalki region by a distance of 150-180 km.

The aviation of the district did not lag behind the ground troops. Operational report No. 01 of the headquarters of the PribOVO Air Force was released at 17-00 on June 20. Without much emotion, the report states: **"During 20.6.41, Air Force units were relocated to operational airfields, dispersed and camouflaged materiel at airfields. During 20.6.41, the Air Force units did not carry out combat operations.** This phrase has been crossed out with a pen; below, in the same ink, is written: **"Each regiment has one squadron in readiness No. 2, the rest are engaged in combat training."** At 5 o'clock in the morning on June 21, the Operations Report of the Air Force Headquarters No. 2 appears. The document routinely states: **"Units of the Air Force during the night of 21.6.41**

did not carry out hostilities ... " [339] After such orders and reports, you can already quite calmly pick up the stored in TsAMO document (F. 221. Op. 1351. D. 201) and read a completely enchanting phrase on its first page: **"From the magazin**

combat operations of the troops of the North-Western Front on the situation, position and combat operations of the troops from June 18 to 23, 1941. By the way, it is not necessary to travel to Podolsk for this, the document is available in a very high-quality electronic copy

on the website "Feat of the People". What is so amazing about all this? Two points. Firstly, nothing of the kind can be found in the archives of the Leningrad, Western, Kiev and Odessa districts (respectively, the Northern, Western, Southwestern and Southern fronts). It stubbornly fails. And this is very strange - how could there be such a difference in the dates and terms for bringing troops to a state of high combat readiness within the framework of one country and one army? Second and most importantly, why did all these preparations have no effect on the course and outcome of the border battle in the Baltic states? The shock and confusion from the "surprise enemy attack" seized the headquarters of the North-Western Front to the same extent as the headquarters of all other fronts. Or maybe not in the "same". The headquarters of the 11th Army of the NWF left Kaunas and "relocated" to the east at noon on June 22, thus setting a kind of "record of the day" ...

March to the Neman

The 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht was to defeat the left (southern) flank of the North-Western Front. On the eve of the invasion, the 3rd TGr included two tank corps: the 39th (7th and 20th tank, 14th and 20th motorized divisions) and the 57th (12th and 19th tank, 18th motorized division). Three of the four tank divisions (12th TD, 19th TD and 20th TD) were formed in the fall of 1940 on the basis of infantry divisions, there was no "two years of experience in modern warfare" there.

In addition to these divisions, the Group also included: the 101st battalion of flamethrower tanks, the 643rd anti-tank battalion (Czech 47-mm anti-tank guns on the tracked chassis of the Pz-I tankette), the 51st regiment of Nebelwerfer rocket launchers, six separate artillery divisions (150-mm and 210-mm guns), engineer, reconnaissance, anti-aircraft units. In the first days of the war, at the stage of breaking through the border fortifications (the German command assumed that they would have to break through with fierce battles), two army (infantry) corps were quickly subordinated to the 3rd TGr: the 5th (5th and 35th infantry divisions) and the 6th (6th and 26th infantry divisions). A characteristic feature of the 3rd

Tank Group was the uncommonly poor composition of the tank fleet. The best that was at that time in the Wehrmacht (medium tanks Pz-III), she did not get a single one, and the companies of medium tanks provided for by the staffing table were armed with Czech Pz-

38(t) - light tanks (weight 9.7 tons) with bulletproof armor [117] and a 37 mm gun. But even these "powerful machines" were not found in the required quantity, and as a line tank in three divisions of the 3rd TGr, machine-gun tankettes Pz-I were used in a total of 126 pieces; this was nowhere else in the summer of 1941 (in the 4th TGr there were no "units" in tank regiments at all, in the 2nd TGr there were 18 of them, in the 1st TGr - 8 units). The only type of tank that could create some problems for anti-tank rifle divisions of the Red Army was the so-called. "heavy" Pz-IV; each tank division of the 3rd TGr had 30 tanks of this type.

The fleet of wheeled vehicles was not much better - not only the motorized divisions of the 3rd TGr, reorganized from ordinary infantry in the last months before the invasion of the USSR, but the motorized infantry regiments of tank divisions were equipped with a motley mixture of various vehicles; for the most part, it was captured French equipment (up to grain vans), which created inevitable problems with maintenance, spare parts and cross-country ability on Russian "direction roads". In general, the wretched equipment of the 3rd TGr and its successful combat operations (with record low losses of personnel, moreover) can serve as a clear, in some way even exaggerated caricature, illustration of the fundamental thesis: it's not equipment that fights, it's fighting (or do not fight) people. At the stage of planning the operation, the Germans stubbornly

(and ultimately unsuccessfully) tried to understand - what is the Red Army command going to do in this direction? On May 16, 1941, the headquarters of the 9th Army of the Wehrmacht prepared a report in which extremely contradictory assessments of the enemy's intentions were given: "**Intensive work on the construction of border fortifications in several lines every 5 km, the construction of a large number of forces directly at the border suggest that a long-term, frontal defense of the border is being prepared.** On the margins of the typewritten document, it is written by hand: "**The number of divisions that the High Command of the Ground Forces assumes (3 per 100 km!) East of the Suwalki ledge and the 5th TD near Alytus do not give grounds for making such a conclusion.**"

The exclamation point focuses attention on the truth, obvious to a military specialist, that the forces of three divisions cannot provide long-term defense on a front of 100 km. Further, on the same page of the document, however, even more decisive actions of the Red Army are assumed: "**Bringing motorized and tank formations close to the border makes it possible to assume that with**

preparing the German side for an attack, the enemy will carry out, in accordance with his tactical principles (see Appendix 2), a preventive or simultaneous offensive with a limited purpose in order to disrupt or hinder our preparations for an attack. [340] On June 21, the head of the operations department

of the headquarters of the 3rd TGr signs the last reconnaissance report on the enemy (Feindnachrichtenblatt) before the start of the war. There is a lot of factual information about the enemy, and it is quite accurate; Thus, out of the nine formations of the Red Army mentioned in the report, eight are present with their real numbers, and their deployment was revealed quite close to reality. But the Germans still fail to understand the intentions of the Soviet command. Accordingly, the task was set: ***“During interrogation, it is important to establish what major (long-term) intentions the Russian High Command pursues with its operations. During the interrogation of the captured officers, it is important to find out why the Russian forces were deployed in front of the Neman, instead of, with the expected superiority of the German forces, to stand behind the Neman or even choose the tactics of retreat into the depths of a large country ... ”[341]***
Never

understanding the riddle of the operational art of the Red Army (in parentheses, we note that no one has yet been able to solve it), the command of the 3rd Tank Group of the Wehrmacht was preparing to fight according to all the rules of military science. Expecting to meet fierce resistance in the border zone, minefields, reinforced concrete pillboxes near the roads, ambushes in the forests, the Germans even went a little too "smart" with the choice of routes for advancing motorized formations; Thus, in the "Instructions on the conduct of operations of the 3rd Tank Group", sent in mid-June to the headquarters of the corps, it

was said: "It should be taken into account ***that the main roads in our offensive zone are occupied by enemy troops and have barriers that extend to a great depth. Therefore, the advance of forward units should not be carried out directly on the roads or near them.*** The offensive ***should be away from the roads in order to later reach the road behind enemy lines and thus prevent the retreat of its advanced border forces to the rear positions ... ”[342]*** barriers, restore destroyed

roads and in the future build bridge crossings across the Neman. Given that the terrain in the offensive zone (especially on the southern flank) is replete with lakes and small forest

rivers, special attention was paid to the capture of crossings and inter-lake passes. ***“Enemy border posts, guard detachments, crossings and bridges should be attacked and captured by small strike groups before the enemy has time to report the threat or destroy artificial structures. Such actions must be carried out suddenly, skillfully, boldly and selflessly. [342]***

To achieve maximum skill and courage, it was decided to attract saboteurs from the Brandenburg Special Purpose Regiment. ***“For the battle for the inter-lake passes at Kapchiamiestis, Veisiai and Shlavantai (settlements 25–30 km west of Merkine. - M.S.), as well as to capture the crossing at Merkine, units of a special regiment are transferred to the disposal of the 12th Panzer Division destination “Brandenburg”. The divisions of this regiment - for each object of 20-30 people - must occupy the previously indicated passages and keep them open, and take the bridge in Merkin before the advance detachments [of the tank division] approach***

or ***prevent the explosion of this bridge. [343]*** All these efforts and tricks were aimed at solving one, the main task: on the very first day of the offensive, making the most of the tactical surprise factor, go to the Neman and capture (bring) crossings to the eastern bank before the stunned enemy had time to pull up to the river frontier of a large force. The task is very difficult - taking into account the terrain and the distance of 40-70 km from the border to the Neman. Returning to the history of the combat operations of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front, we note that the task of attacking to such a depth in one day was not even set there (not to mention that it was never carried out).

Ultimately, the formations of the 3rd TGr were deployed in the following order (see Fig. 12). Two tank divisions (7th and 20th tank divisions) of the 39th tank corps crossed the border along the Kaunas highway, then turned east and advanced along the Kalvaria, Simnas road towards Alytus. The motorized divisions of the corps (14th MD, 20th MD) remained in the second echelon, there were simply no free roads for their advance into Soviet territory. To the south of the 39th TC, along the road Lazdiai, Seiriyai, two infantry divisions (5th infantry division, 35th infantry division) of the 5th army corps advanced to

the Neman River. The most difficult offensive route in terms of terrain was for the formations of the 57th tank corps; the main road (which still had to be reached after overcoming 15 km of forest with numerous lakes) through Kapchiamiestis, Leipalangis on Merkin was provided to the 18th motorized division (with one of the two motorized infantry regiments

division was left in the second echelon). The 12th Panzer Division was supposed to reach the road on Merkina through the forest, to solve this problem, the division was reinforced with one infantry regiment from the 5th AK. The 19th Panzer Division remained on the territory of the "Suwalk salient" in the reserve of the command of the

Panzer Group. On the left (northern) flank of the 3rd TGr, the offensive of motorized formations was covered by two infantry divisions (6th infantry division, 26th infantry division) of the 6th army corps, they had to go more than 80 km and capture the crossings across the Neman near the city of Prienai (initially it was assumed that after that, two motorized divisions of the 39th TC will be transported through the Prienai to the eastern bank of the Neman). The right (southern) flank of the Tank Group was covered by its

attack on Grodno by the 8th Army Corps of the 9th Army. As for the saboteurs from the Brandenburg, whose all-crushing power was sung by two generations of Soviet "historians", their participation was limited to the

following: "In the afternoon [the **commander** of the 57th corps] **introduced himself as a lieutenant - the commander of a group of saboteurs (special forces). He does not know anything about the transport vehicles at his disposal and the necessary equipment. Inquiries to the command of the 3rd Tank Group by telephone, made by the chief of the operational department of the headquarters of the corps, showed that the use of the special group on June 22 is hardly possible, since the technical equipment must be pre-ordered from Warsaw only by special order of the Group.** [344] However, this circumstance did not affect the pace and scale of the German

At midnight on June 21–22, Intelligence Report No. 02 was prepared at the headquarters of the district / front, which had already moved from Riga to a field command post in the forest near Panevezys. The last one before the start of the war. The grouping of enemy troops in the "Kaunas-Vilnius direction" (in reality it was the 3rd Panzer Group plus seven infantry divisions of the 16th Army from the GA "North") was described as follows. It was established that there were headquarters of four infantry divisions, and only one of them (5th Infantry Division) had the same numbering as the real one. In the Insterburg area (60 km from the border), the headquarters of the 12th Army Corps was "discovered", which in reality was located near Brest. Seven infantry regiments are also mentioned (it is not clear - which, according to the compilers of the report, were part of the identified infantry divisions or acting independently), as well as the "206th cavalry regiment" that does not exist in nature. Instead of four tank divisions, there is only one single "25th tank battalion" in the summary. At the same time, the presence of only the 5th Infantry Division, 405th

an infantry regiment and some unnumbered infantry battalion. The ill-fated "tank battalion" was supposedly in the area of Insterburg (now Chernyakhovsk). [345] Such an assessment of the enemy grouping - even remotely not coinciding with the real one - explains a lot in the decisions and actions of the command of the North-Western Front. Almost at the same time that Intelligence Report No. 02 was signed, the notorious "Directive Number One" arrived at the district / front headquarters from Moscow. Then, at 2:25 p.m. On June 22, on behalf of the Military Council of PribOVO, a Directive (b / n) was issued for the command of the 8th and 11th Armies. Repeating verbatim the text of the Moscow Directive (***"an attack is possible during June 22-23 ... do not succumb to provocations ... at the same time be in full combat readiness"***), the command of the district / front added a few points from itself. In particular, it was ordered ***"to transport the families of the commanding staff of the 10th, 125th, 33rd and 128th rifle divisions to the rear only in the event of large enemy forces crossing the border."*** [346]

This is a very interesting indication. Even if only this phrase remained from all the documents of the pre-war period, it alone could tell how the high command of the Red Army imagined the future war. The 10th, 125th, 33rd and 128th Rifle Divisions are the very first echelon of troops on the Northwestern Front; the headquarters of the formations were stationed in towns and towns (Kuliai, Batakiai, Vilkaishkis, Seiriyai), only 20–30 km away from the border. The mere fact that by the morning of June 22 the families of command personnel remained in the border zone testifies to the ultimate irresponsibility [118]. And even having received a warning from Moscow about a possible enemy invasion (it is strange that it was not the border districts that warned Moscow, but vice versa), F.I. Kuznetsov still doubts that "crossing the border by large enemy forces" is inevitable, and the families of command personnel must be seized and taken out without wasting a single minute on reflection.

As for all the other divisions located a little further than 30 km from the border, the district command does not see any reasons for the emergency evacuation of the families of command personnel. "Nails should be made from these people ..." It also follows that the plan for the evacuation of the families of the command staff was developed in PribOVO in advance. In the archive (TsAMO. F. 16. Op. 2951. D. 238) a map has been preserved, by the way, decorated with a stamp of the highest category of secrecy (ss / s), evacuation and placement of families of command personnel. It is noteworthy that all "landing points" are located southwest of the Siauliai line, Vilnius; apparently, the developers of the plan considered an enemy invasion to a depth of more than 100–130 km as something extremely unlikely.

As a result of such assessments and decisions, the "grouping of troops" of the North-Western Front in the border zone south of the Kalvaria road, Alytus, consisted of a single 128th rifle division. The main forces of the 11th Army (three rifle divisions) were located north of Kalvaria, the 10th PTABR was hidden in a forest area west of Kaunas and on June 22 could not even theoretically prevent the advance of German tank divisions. Yes, the Directive of the Military Council mentioned above demanded ***"immediately move the headquarters of the 126th Rifle Division and the possible number of its infantry and artillery to the Kalvaria area, where all units of the 126th Rifle Division will advance", but in fact this division, which was advancing from the depths of the district*** for west, by the evening of June 22, she could only reach Alytus. Of course, one 128th rifle division could not hold a line of defense on a front 60 km wide,

and even more so it could not stop the advance of three enemy tank, two infantry and one motorized divisions. This is the undeniable truth. But only one half of the truth. The second is that a chaotic flight after the first shots is not the only alternative to a stubborn defense. Theoretically, there are two more options for action, called "mobile defense" and "withdrawal". You don't need to invent anything, everything is written in the Charter (***"inflict losses on the advancing enemy, force him to turn around, waste time organizing an offensive and, without engaging in a stubborn battle with him, slip away from the blow"***).

A rifle division consists of nine infantry battalions, six (including the anti-tank defense division) artillery battalions; theoretically, this is enough to inflict a series of "pin pricks" on each of the 3–4 road directions that were available in the offensive zone of the 3rd TGr, capable of reducing the rate of advance from phenomenal to normal (10–15 km per day). On the evening of June 21, units of the 128th Rifle Division were in the Lazdijai, Seiriyai, Simnas area (i.e., in the area of a group of lakes between the two roads leading to Alytus), this is an ideal place for organizing ambushes and flank strikes. Five defense nodes of the Alytus UR, where 273 bunkers were in various stages of construction on the front 57 km from Kalvaria to Kapchemiamestis (20 of them had already been built), could also interfere with the enemy in some way. And at the normal pace of the offensive, the Germans would have reached the Neman on the 3rd-4th day of the war, which meant for them the collapse of the entire plan of the operation.

In any case, the result of the withdrawal should have been the appearance of a division (and the 128th rifle division was staffed even in excess of the regular norm - 15,540 people) on the eastern bank of the Neman. But nothing showed up anywhere

The 128th Rifle Division simply disappeared. Disappeared from the reports of the front headquarters, disappeared from the operational map, disappeared from the battlefield [119]. At 9.35 on June 22, the commander of the NWF reported to Moscow:

“Large forces of tanks and motorized units are breaking through to Druskeniki.

The 128th Rifle Division is mostly surrounded, there is no exact information about its condition. Ten minutes later, at 0945, the Front Armed Forces Directive

was signed, in which the commander of the 11th Army was ordered to ***“ensure the withdrawal of the 128th Rifle Division, preventing its encirclement, prepare***

positions on the eastern bank of the river. Neman to the left border of the front .

[347] That's it. Any further references to the 128th Rifle Division consist of the words “no communication unknown.”

The disappearance of the division as an organized whole, of course, does not mean the instantaneous annihilation of 15 thousand people. Separate fighters, separate disparate subunits entered the battle, forced the enemy to suffer losses; fighting in the forests on the western bank of the Neman continued until the end of June. Judging by the lists of military graves kept in the archives of the Republic of Lithuania, 88 German soldiers were buried in the area of the Seiriyai road, Alytus.

[348] Taking into account the number of wounded, which is usually three times as many, the figures are quite tangible by the standards of the Wehrmacht. An entry dated June 22 in the ZhBD of the 3rd TGR briefly but clearly states: ***"Where the enemy took the fight, he fought to the death, stubbornly and bravely."***

We should not forget that the NWF command had at its disposal another extremely mobile and powerful enough tool (8 bomber regiments) that could slow down the advance of Wehrmacht tank corps. For the aviation of that era, a column of motorized troops was an ideal target. Bombs dropped from a "horizontal" bomber scatter in the form of an ellipse, strongly elongated along one of its axes, and when attacking a mechanized column, it was necessary to ensure accurate aiming only along one coordinate ("left-right"), "further-closer" no longer had values in a situation where the length of the target is measured in kilometers. And if the defeat of the tank was a very unlikely event (the FAB-50 pierced the armor of light tanks only when it exploded no further than 1-2 meters from the target), then cars, gas tanks, tracked tractors, which in total accounted for more than 80% of all moving objects of the tank division, were extremely vulnerable. At least, Soviet historiography traditionally explained the disappearance of the mechanized corps of the Red Army precisely by “massive enemy air strikes”.

Already at 9-45 on June 22, in the Directive of the Front Armed Forces mentioned above, the commander of the Front Air Force was ordered to **"strike the enemy's Tilsit and Kalvarian groupings with strong blows."** Between 10 and 12 o'clock (the exact time is not indicated in the document), the commander of the NWF Air Force, Major General Ionov, signs Combat Order No. 01 / OP. The document clearly shows the rapid change in the plans of the front command. If the original typewritten text (most likely prepared back in peacetime) suggested striking at airfields and enemy troops on the territory of East Prussia, then the handwritten correction made in black ink in the order clearly changes the task - now the main efforts are ordered to be focused on the destruction of motorized mechanized columns the enemy advancing on Soviet territory; in particular, for two air divisions, "tanks in the area of Kalvariya, Lazdiai, Seiriyai" are indicated as the object of attack. [349]

At 12:20, the bombers of the 31st BAP delivered the first and most powerful blow (a total of 38 crews took part in the raid), dropping 18 FAB-250s and 174 FAB-100s on the "concentration of enemy troops south of Kalvaria". [350] In total, by the end of the day, at least four massive raids involving 103 bombers were carried out along the roads to Alytus (a few more sorties are difficult to identify at the location of the bombing, or these sorties are not confirmed by "cross-checking" reports of different headquarters). In addition, at least one raid was carried out by the forces of the 3rd long-range aviation corps: at 15-40, nine bombers of 207 DBAP attacked an enemy mechanized convoy on the Leipalingis road, Merkine. [351] In total, about 600–700 bombs (mostly FAB-100) were dropped on the mech columns of the 3rd TGr. Result? Here with the result everything is much more complicated. In the memoirs of the commander of the 3rd

Tank Group, G. Goth, there are several words related to the action (inaction) of the Soviet Air Force. The words are: **"The actions of tanks and aircraft were not noted. Air reconnaissance, carried out in clear weather, did not detect any enemy movements east of the Neman .** And it's all. In the combat journals studied by the 3rd TGr and 57th TC, there is not a single word at all about the actions of Soviet aviation on June 22. Where did the bombs fall? To lift the veil (it is too early to talk about an exhaustive solution of the issue) over the

mystery of the surprisingly low efficiency of the actions of the Soviet Air Force allows the report of the commander of the 1st battery (company) of the 84th anti-aircraft division; this unit was attached to the 7th Panzer Division with the task

"cover 7 TD in the area where the battery is included in the march column" . The events of the first day of the war are

described in the report as follows: **"... The situation in the air. 11.20. A raid by enemy bombers "Martin Bomber" (as the Germans called the SB light 2-engine bomber, the time coincides with the report of the 31st BAP command to the nearest minute). 11.25. Gas alert. 17.25. Dropping bombs along the march road 7 TD. During all the raids, the aircraft were out of range of the battery** (highlighted by me. - *M.S.*). **Own losses: no. Enemy losses: no. Ammunition consumption: none. [352]**

The answer, as you can see, is very simple. The weakest thing that a German anti-aircraft battery could be armed with was the 20-mm quick-firing gun FLAK-30/38 with a reach in height (at different elevation angles) of 2200-3700 m, a slant firing range of up to 4800 m. However, the 1st battery (company) of the 84th division was armed - as can be judged from the list of spent ammunition - with a more powerful 37-mm anti-aircraft gun, having a reach in height of the order of 4500-4700 m. If that day the German anti-aircraft gunners did not even open fire ("shell consumption : **no**"), then this forces us to assume that the "attacking" aircraft were far beyond the zone of possible destruction. Simply put, two hundred bombs were dropped from a height of 5 km, "into the white light like a pretty penny", after which they flew away with a sense of

accomplishment ... Under such conditions, with such an organization of defense, the offensive of the 3rd Wehrmacht Tank Group turned into a forced march. In the Combat Log of the 3rd TGr, he is

described as follows: **"04.10. The 6th Army Corps captured the enemy's field fortifications on the border. During the offensive, a significantly weaker enemy presence near the border, especially artillery, is detected**

than previously thought ... Around 6.00. The tanks approached Kalvaria, which by 8.00 (as in the text. - *M.S.*) , having met weak enemy resistance, w 06.15.

The 30th motorized infantry regiment of the 18th MD reaches Kapchiamestis (15 km east of the border. - *M.S.*) and, encountering only slight resistance, advances towards

Leipalingis. It is still impossible to clearly determine the position of the enemy. Only the 5th Army Corps faced fierce enemy resistance in some areas. 5th Infantry Division broke into Lazdiyai at dawn and destroyed the enemy at the positions (lines) of bunkers.

Around

09.00 Until now, the 3rd Panzer Group has no clarity about the presence of enemy forces located, according to reports received before 22.06, near the border - whether they managed to retreat in time before the start of the attack or were so stunned that it was still possible to establish only slight resistance and retreat to the Neman ...

10.40.

The 7th Panzer Division passes Simnas, while to the north of it the 20th Panzer Division occupies a lake defile between Simnas and Zhuvintai Lake (25 km west of the Neman River. - M.S.).

14.00.

The initial goal of the first day of the offensive: to reach the river on a wide front. Neman and try to force it - the first to reach 7 TD, which at 13.10 broke into the western part of the city of Alytus and occupied both bridges across the river. Neman, remaining intact. Nobody expected this. 17.15.

The

30th motorcycle battalion (18th MD from the 57th TC) has reached the bridge over the Neman at Merkine and is starting to cross. Thus, there is no need for countless plans for building bridges for the crossing of both tank corps.

18.15.

The 56th infantry regiment from the 5th AK marched on foot to the river. The Neman is a brilliant work of the infantry, which in such a short time, despite collisions with the enemy, poor terrain conditions and hot weather, covered a distance of more than 40 km (emphasis mine. - M.S.). The commander of the regiment, Colonel Thum (Thum), is presented for an award in a report to the High Command ... " [353]

Having quickly overcome the dizziness from the extraordinary and unexpected success, the command of the 3rd TGr demanded to continue the march beyond the Neman, without stopping for a minute. **"The corps were informed of the tasks for the evening of 22.6 and the morning of 23.6: to move forward to the east, not expecting a division of the second echelon; continue the evening offensive on June 22 as long as possible, 57th TC - through Orany to Eishishkes, 39th TC - through Olkieniki and Butrimonis to Vilnius.** The miracle, however, did not happen and the Germans failed to capture Vilnius (130 km from the border) on the first day of the war; nevertheless, the 57th TK, which actually had no other enemy on June 22, except for difficult terrain, transported the 12th Panzer Division across the bridge near Merkina, and by nightfall,

the head of the marching column retired 25 km east of the Neman, and the advanced detachments of motorcyclists reached Orana.

The results of the day were summed up in the ZhBD of the 3rd Tank Group as follows: "In training [troops] , ***the Red Army apparently preferred the forms of internal political struggle, civil war and revolution to the requirements of military operations at the front. Its leadership these days has signed for its own incompetence.***"

5th Panzer Division i

motorized division). 3 MK was an "old" mechanized corps, formed back in 1940; it was a strong unit, well-equipped with military and auxiliary equipment. According to the results of 1940, 3 MK was recognized as the best among the then available mechanized corps of the Red Army. The first commander of the formation was the future Marshal Eremenko, the commander of the 5th Panzer Division (and later the chief of staff of the corps) was the future Marshal Rotmistrov. By the beginning of the war, the 3rd mechanized corps had about 3.9 thousand vehicles (one of the best figures among all mechanized corps), three hundred tractors and tractors, 670 tanks, including 51 KV and 50 T-34s. A serious force, and an oncoming tank battle with a hundred Soviet tanks of "new types" did not bode well for the tankers of the 3rd TGr of the Wehrmacht.

In the last pre-war days, the divisions of the 3rd mechanized corps were withdrawn from their places of permanent deployment and concentrated in the forests east of the Neman, in the Jonava, Kaunas, Alytus zone. On the evening of June 22, Directive No. 3 of the Main Military Council of the Red Army set the task of ***"delivering a powerful counterattack from the Kaunas region to the flank and rear of the enemy's Suwalki grouping, destroy it in cooperation with the Western Front, and by the end of June 24, capture the Suwalki region."*** At the moment when such a decision was made, Moscow did not yet have any detailed and reliable information about what was really happening at the front; Directive No. 3, most likely, was prepared on the basis of pre-war plans, in which there was the idea of "cutting off the Suwalki ledge" by a mechanized corps strike from the Kaunas, Alytus area. [354] And yet, by chance or not, but in this case, Directive No. 3 was quite consistent with the current situation - the offensive of the 3rd Wehrmacht TGr posed the greatest threat (exit to the deep rear of the Western Front with its subsequent encirclement), and it was to defeat it should have used combat-ready reserves.

Just as on the Southwestern Front, the order of the High Command was ignored. In contrast to the situation in the SWF, we have a document explaining the motives for such a decision - at 10 pm on June 22, the Military Council of the NWF reported to the People's Commissar of Defense: "The main **blow** [of the enemy] **in the direction of the Tilsit, Siauliai highway ...] in the near future, in order to stop the enemy's attack, decides the fate of the front's operation ...** " At the same time, the situation in the "Kaunas and Alytus directions" was regarded as less alarming, the front command assumed that **"four rifle divisions of the 11th Army were stubbornly fighting, retreating to the east to delay the enemy defense on the right bank of the river. Neman. [355]** In accordance with this assessment of the situation, the NWF command decided to use 3 MK to strike not in the south-west direction (on Suwalki), but in the north-west

direction, on Raseiniai, Skaudvil; at the same time, one of the divisions of the mechanized corps (5th tank) was withdrawn from its composition and transferred to the operational subordination of the 11th Army. **[356]** This "transfer" did not mean any movement of troops in space, since the 5th TD was constantly stationed in the Alytus area. There, at the crossings over the Neman, she had to counterattack the German tank tanks that had broken through to the river.

parts.

The archive fund of the 5th TD exists, and it is unusually (for a division defeated in the first days of the war) extensive. It was declassified in December 2009, and now we can learn a lot of interesting things. There is, in particular, "Assignment for command and staff exercises with means of communication", conducted in the division on April 11–12, 1941. The initial situation for conditional "combat operations" was described as follows: "The enemy is pushing our rifle division to the Neman in the **strip Merkine, Druskininkai. Aviation "Western" made raids on Alytus, Prienai and made the bridges over the Neman unusable. Dominance in the air on the side of the enemy** . It is easy to see an amazing similarity with the reality of June 22, with the only difference being that the real "Western" did not destroy the bridges across the Neman, but, on the contrary, tried with all their might to prevent their destruction. During the exercises, the tank division was tasked with establishing a crossing over the Neman near Cape Kanyukai (a southern suburb of Alytus), counterattacking the enemy, reaching the area of the inter-lake defile near Simnas by the end of the day and advancing on Kalvariya the next day. **[357]** There is a so-called. "working notebook" of the chief of staff of the division, in which, literally by the minute, the actions of commanders and their subordinates in

first day of mobilization. [358] There is a detailed plan of action for the communications service when raising a division on alert, a diagram of wired communication lines in the area where parts of the division should be assembled on alert (this area was supposed to be west of Alytus, between the Neman River and lakes). A statement is attached to the plan, from which it follows that as of the end of May 1941, the 5th TD included: 1 powerful RSB radio station, 14 so-called. "regimental" radios 5-AK, 25 portable radios of low power (RB, RRU, 6-PK), 194 telephone sets and 358 km of cable; and this, of course, not counting 170 tank radios. [359] There is an extract from an extremely important (and top-secret) document - a scheme for the mobilization deployment of PribOVO troops; It follows from the document that at the end of May 1941, almost all combat units of the 5th Panzer Division were kept in wartime states: two tank, artillery and motorized rifle regiments, a reconnaissance battalion, a communications battalion and an anti-aircraft division. [360] There is a

pompous "History of the 9th Tank Regiment" (one of the two that were part of the 5th Tank Division), which describes in the most enthusiastic terms the "battle path" of the unit, i.e. its participation in the defeat of the Polish army defeated by the Germans. army in September 1939:

"There are no words that could fully characterize the joy and pride of each fighter. Everyone burned with a single desire to join the battle and fight for the happiness and joy of the peoples of Western Belarus. At 16.00 on the bank of the river. Neman was a party meeting where the communists expressed their boundless devotion to the Lenin-Stalin party, talked about the honor and glory that fell to the lot of every communist ... After the meeting, a rally of the entire personnel was held, which also went with great enthusiasm ... Exactly at five o'clock, wire barriers passed, border posts that for 20 years separated the peoples of Western Belarus from their half-brothers living in a single family of the Great Soviet Union ... By the end of the day on September 17, our units were concentrated 70 km from the former border, and on September 20 they were already in Sokulka m.; 400 km left behind, passed by us through the territory of Western Belarus. The Great Liberation Campaign will remain in the memory of the fighters and commanders for a long time. However, even

among such pathos one can find important information. For example, quite specific information about whether Soviet tracked vehicles always broke down after 50–100 km of march:

"Thanks to a good knowledge of the machines and a loving attitude towards them, the tanks went their way without breakdowns, forced stops. The tank, commanded by a member of the Komsomol comrade. Chernyak and driver comrade. Karpenko, walked through the fields and roads of Western Belarus,

Latvia more than 2000 km without a single breakdown and forced stop ... Driver comrade. Karpenko looked after the machine so lovingly that it worked 60 engine hours in excess of the norm ... Tractor driver comrade. Grigory Malyshev drove his tractor 1600 km and nowhere lagged behind his unit. He always appeared exactly where the tanks themselves could not overcome natural obstacles ... " [361]

The archival fund of the 5th Panzer Division lacks only the very "smallness" - documents of the first days (it did not have subsequent ones) of a real war with a real, stubborn enemy. There is nothing - not a single order, operational summary, combat report. A historian who will fly from the Moon to Earth in a hundred years will be able to state with full confidence ("archival documents irrefutably testify") that everything ended with the Great Liberation Campaign ... However, the manuscripts do not burn down to one. In this case, the handwritten "Journal of Combat Operations" of the 5th howitzer regiment of the division has been preserved; at least to a minimal extent, but it also helps to reconstruct the real course of events: ***"June 18, 1941***

10.00. 5 GAP

as part of all units (010/17), who continued his studies in the Oransky camps of the Lithuanian SSR, was raised by the headquarters of the 5th division on combat alert (complete coincidence, in content and date, with a similar order in the formations of the 12th mechanized corps. - ***M. S.) and was in the Orana area from June 18 to June 20, 1941. The regiment was commanded by Major Komarov, deputy. commander for political affairs, battalion***

commissar Bekarevich, chief of staff, major Tkachev. June 20, 1941 4:00 am. A combat order was received for shtadiva-5 to concentrate the regiment by 8.00

in the forest 1.5 km east of Shvabishki (8 km east of the southern bridge near Alytus. - ***M.S.). 7.50. The regiment concentrated in the forest 1.5 km east. Shvabishki, where he was until June 22, 1941. An all-round anti-tank defense was organized in this area and equipment for dugouts from aerial***

The artillery (howitzer) regiment of the 5th Panzer Division was of quite a standard composition: two divisions, six 4-gun batteries; The regiment was armed with 12 122 mm howitzers and 12 152 mm howitzers. A distance of 8 km to the Neman and bridges across it allowed guns of this caliber to conduct aimed fire at concentrations of enemy manpower and equipment, but it was not possible to advance a howitzer regiment closer to the river

practical sense, besides, the forest reliably hid firing positions from observation from the air. What

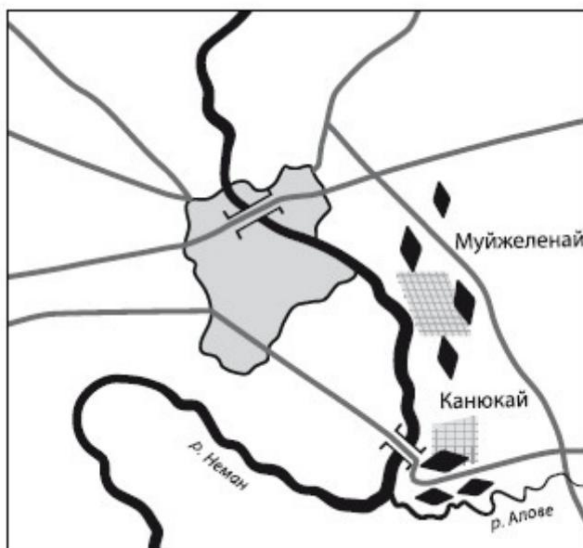
were the other parts of the division, raised on combat alert on June 18, doing at that time? The main striking force was two tank regiments (the 9th tank regiment and the 10th tank regiment), which were armed with a total of 50 newest T-34s, 26 three-tower T-28s, 165 light BT-7s and 14 T-26s, totaling 255 tanks (only serviceable armored vehicles are listed). There were also heavy KV tanks in the division in the amount of 27 units, but in May they were transferred to their neighbors in the Western OVO (the shipment was made at the Volkovysk station, which suggests that these KVs were included in the 11 MK). In addition, the division had 56 BA-10 cannon armored vehicles. Taking into account the armament of the anti-aircraft division (an outstanding feature of the division was a complete set of 12 of the latest rapid-fire anti-aircraft guns of 37 mm caliber), the 5th TD had about 320 "barrels" suitable for destroying light tanks, which were

armed with the 39th tank corps of the Wehrmacht. Primary documents, as noted above, have not been preserved (or they are still classified and inaccessible). Of the available "secondary sources" (research, memoirs), the article of the Doctor of History, Associate Professor of Vilnius University S. Egelyavichus deserves attention. [348] The author for a long time collected the memories of witnesses and eyewitnesses (one of whom he himself was, however, at a very young age), and also used such a source as the records of military graves preserved in the Lithuanian archives; the war on the territory of the Vilna region was relatively short (a few days in June 1941 and one or two weeks in the summer of 1944), the relationship between the invaders and the local population was not too conflicting, and therefore the burial places of German and Soviet soldiers were not subjected to vandalism (at least

on a massive scale). S. Yegelyavichus describes the preparation of the 5th TD for the battle as follows: ***"On June 18-19, the tanks of the division from the military camp in the city of Alytus moved to the high steep eastern (right) bank of the Neman. At a distance of 300-400 m from the Neman on a high bank, the tanks were dispersed on the outskirts of two neighboring villages - Kanyukai and Muyzhelenai ... Some of the tanks were in shelters equipped in the first hours of the redeployment of tanks. A tank ambush was located on the northwestern edge of the Kanyukai grove near the highway. From there, the Kanyukai bridge over the Neman was visible, as well as the highway on the approaches to the bridge on the left (western) bank and the nearest segment of the winding highway ri***

The intention to use a tank division for static defense is perhaps debatable, but there is no doubt that the eastern bank of the Neman near the Kanyukaisky ("southern") bridge was an ideal ambush site. The tanks that crossed the river had to turn sharply, drive several tens of meters along the sandy bank and then climb up a high, steep slope; The 125-horsepower engine of a 10-ton Czech tank hummed "on its last legs" and the steel box crawled out onto a flat area at the speed of a turtle. One or two tanks knocked out on the slope inevitably stopped the movement of the entire column, there is absolutely no place to turn around in battle formation, a tractor for towing tanks that cluttered the movement can only be delivered by helicopter. To complete the effect on the left, the ambush area is covered by the bed of the Alove River flowing into the Neman. In general, all this strongly resembles the legendary Thermopylae, where 300 Spartans stopped the huge army of the Persian king in a mountain gorge ...

"Thermopylae in Alytus style" was realized in the following way. In the first half of the day on June 22, the "northern group" of tanks of the 5th TD (from among those that were dispersed in the woods near the village of Muizhelenai) moved towards the city, probably with the task of crossing the bridge to the western bank of the Neman. During the advance on the outskirts of Alytus, the tanks came under attack from German aircraft, and several burned-out BT-7s stood there as a mute monument to defeat until the end of the war. That, in fact, is all. No more traces of the fighting of the "northern group" of the 5th Panzer Division are found - neither in the documents of the enemy, nor in the stories of local residents. As for military graves, 14 Wehrmacht servicemen were buried in the eastern part of Alytus and in the suburban fields near the village of Muizelenai, but there were no tankers among them (the Germans in the inscriptions on the grave crosses indicated the place of service of the deceased to the nearest company). **[348]**



Rice. 25. Tank battle near Alytus

The first to approach Alytus was the 20th German Panzer Division [120], which, without a fight, crossed the Neman along the unexploded northern bridge and moved past the disappeared Soviet tanks to the military airfield located to the northeast of the city. In his famous book of memoirs, O. Karius (at that time a tanker of the 20th Panzer Division) writes: ***"We reached the first goal of our movement that day, the airfield in Alytus, without incident. Happy, we threw off our dusty uniforms and were glad when we finally found water to wash ourselves properly. "It's not bad to fight here," said Sergeant Dehler, the commander of our tank, with a chuckle after once again pulling his head out of a tub of water.***

The capture of Alytus is described in almost the same terms in the "History combat way" of the 21st tank regiment of the 20th tank division:

"Deadly speed and swampy terrain led to the fact that in the second half of the first day of the war, only the weak parts of the 1st and 2nd battalions reached Alytus. It was possible to prevent the take-off of several Russian aircraft, in addition, there were skirmishes at the airfield and at the edge of the forest. Aerial reconnaissance discovered several large tanks in the forest (probably, we are talking about the T-34 from the 5th TD. - M.S.), but they never appeared. At night, the regiment, together with the 20th motorcycle battalion of the division, guarded the heights near the bridgehead in Alytus. At night, one Russian tank wandered around the city, otherwise everything was calm ... "

The circumstances of the capture of the airfield by the Germans can also be looked at from the other side of the front. In the report of Lieutenant Colonel Morozov, commander of the 86th

air base (it was she who served the airfield in Alytus) we read: ***"In the period from about 14 to 16 hours on 22.6.41, from the command post, we observed the movement of a column of tanks in the direction of Alytus. Mistaking a column of enemy tanks for their tanks, they continued to occupy the defense of the airfield. The bridge across the Neman River was not blown up, and the enemy tanks, having passed through the bridge without hindrance, entered the town of the motorized regiment, in the rear of the left flank of the air base and airfield. There was no communication with the units. At 3:30 a.m. (as the text obviously means 3:30 p.m.) on June 22, having received a report from the soldiers of the construction battalion No. to evacuation... The base concentrated in Kaunas at 19.00 22.6.41"***. As of June 28, after several "evacuations" 66 personnel remained in the ranks. Killed - 1, injured - 3, missing - 242. [363]

Where did the need to bury 18 German soldiers come from? Of course, not everyone started to "relocate" right away, someone else was shooting. There was a motorized rifle regiment of the 5th Panzer Division. Do not forget that - according to the operational reports of the headquarters of the NWF - on the evening of June 22, a whole rifle division (126th rifle division) came to Alytus, and not only left, but "held the bridgehead." Finally, there was the 5th artillery regiment mentioned above and its 24 howitzers, securely hidden in the forest. The regiment, according to the ZhBD, actively and a lot of shots: ***"June 22, 1941 5.20. Firing and control***

platoons of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th batteries took up firing positions on the western edge of the forest 1.5 km east. Shvabishki, and at 16.00 opened fire on accumulations of enemy motorized mechanized units and infantry in the city of Alytus, its outskirts, along the banks of the river. Neman and along the southern bridge across the river. Neman of the city of Alytus, as a result of which the advance of the enemy's motorized parts was delayed; the latter

was confused and suffered heavy losses. After the "northern group" of the 5th Panzer Division rapidly rolled back from Muizelenai to the east, only the artillery regiment of the division and a group of tanks (the composition and size of the group cannot yet be determined) remained potential participants in the battle, concentrated at the "southern" bridge over the Neman; It was there that the main events of the day unfolded.

Despite the fact that the 7th Panzer Division, which lagged behind on the march, reached the Kanyukai bridge no earlier than 17-18 hours (i.e., 12-14 hours after the start of the war and 3-4 hours after the capture of the city and the northern bridge

advanced units of the 20th Panzer Division), the bridge was not blown up. One of the possible explanations for this is given in the article by Yegelyavichus: ***“There were stories among the local population that the Kaniukai bridge was saved from destruction by a young guy, a member of the anti-Soviet underground. After the Soviet tanks entered the eastern bank of the Neman, he discovered wires laid in small bushes on the slopes of the highway leading to the bridge (in those days there were 3 estates between the river and the highway, so it was relatively safe to walk along this area). During the German air raids on the city of Alytus, when it became clear that the war had really begun, he cut out and dragged several meters of wires to the side. [348]*** There was no one to drag back “a few meters of wire” (here it is still appropriate to recall the “Plan for the destruction of bridges”, which on June 18 was ordered to be developed and approved by June 21). A long “steel belt” of German tanks crawled up the slope of the high eastern bank

and found itself under fire from the artillery regiment's tanks and howitzers hidden in ambush. The further course of events cannot be logically and intelligibly reconstructed. Probably the only fact that is not in doubt is that wrecked and burnt tanks remained at the battlefield. A dozen German and 2-3 times more Soviet ones. In the famous (published back in 1988 in VIZh and then cited by hundreds of authors) report of the headquarters of the 3rd TGr, it is said that the 7th tank division lost 11 tanks in a fierce battle near Alytus, including 4 so-called. “heavy” (i.e. Pz-IV).

On the third day of the war, a Wehrmacht military intelligence unit proceeded east along the Kaniukai bridge, which included a translator, a former Lithuanian intelligence officer B. Aušrotas; in their
he writes in his memoirs:

“Having passed the bridge over the Neman, we had to overcome a steep climb of 100 meters or even more. Having reached the flat top of this hill, we saw a real cemetery of tanks ... Getting off the cars, we calculated our own and enemy losses. I managed to count about 30 Soviet T-34s or similar tanks. There were about 12 German tanks there... It is difficult to explain why the armored forces of the Bolsheviks were defeated here... I did not notice any traces of [German] aviation in aid of my tank units. There were no deep craters on the battlefield left after the explosion of bombs. [348] Howitzer shells of 152-mm caliber could also leave quite noticeable craters (the weight of the shell is 40 kg, and the

weight of the most massive German

bombs - 50 kg), but they are not visible - neither in the memoirs of Aushrotas, nor in the surviving photographs of the battlefield near the Kanyukai bridge. And this is also "difficult to explain", given that the fire is hellish in the railroad regiment of the 5th howitzer regiment:

"17.00. To destroy the

tanks that had broken through into the division's defense area and support the counterattack of their tanks, on the orders of the regiment commander, Major Komarov, the 2nd battery - the battery commander, Lieutenant Fomin - took up battle formation in the Kaniukai area, from where it destroyed the southern bridge of the city of Alytus and fired direct fire at fire enemy points located along the eastern (so in the text. - M.S.) bank of the river. Neman, destroying one enemy gun; the remaining losses due to smoke and fire could not be established. The enemy forces in this battle have not been fully established, but a passage through the southern bridge of the city of Alytus was found up to 60 tanks. The commanders of the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th batteries occupied the NP on the eastern bank of the river. Neman and supported the counterattack of the 9th and 10th tank regiments from closed firing positions [121] . This task was performed brilliantly by the battery commanders. [364]

The participation of the German artillery in the battle near Alytus is described in the combat reports of the units of the 7th TD in stingy words, without brilliance:

"78th Artillery Regiment

Morning report from 01.00 23.06.41 ... When

advancing to the city of Alytus, artillery, quickly pushing forward individual guns, suppresses enemy resistance ... Then the 1st and 2nd divisions were transferred to the tank regiment for an offensive in order to expand right (i.e. southern. - M.S.) bridgehead. During the fighting today, the regiment's subunits destroyed or knocked out 12 enemy tanks. Losses: 1 wounded, 2 killed, no missing. 42nd anti-tank battalion of the command post of the division, 01.00

23.06.41 ... 1st company of the anti-tank division (12 guns; most

likely, these were 37-mm "mallets", but

the presence of several units of 50-

mm guns is not excluded. - **M. S.) was subordinate to the 25th tank regiment and knocked out 17 tanks east of Alytus in the afternoon. The 2nd company of the division was the reserve of the Boineburg group without any fighting. The 3rd company of the division took part in the battles of the Boineburg group to Kalvariya and then in the Rotenburg group (i.e., together with the tank regiment. - M.S.) to Alytus, while the 1st platoon in a half-hour battle attacked a much stronger Russian unit, recaptured 6 vehicles from the enemy and took 9**

prisoners.

Losses: Lieutenant Flonig (inaudible) , **wounded.**

2 non-commissioned officers

[365] Of

course, the numbers of casualties given in combat reports for the past day are usually incomplete (an inevitable delay in information). Information about military burials should be recognized as more accurate. On a site about 1 km east of the Kanyukai bridge, 23 Wehrmacht servicemen were buried: 4 from the reconnaissance battalion of the 7th Panzer Division, 1 sapper and 18 from the 25th Panzer Regiment of the division. [348] Taking into account such losses of personnel, the figure of 11 lost tanks does not at all seem “underestimated”, rather, on the contrary, the general list probably included wrecked and temporarily damaged vehicles, including failures due to technical reasons (which for Czech tanks in difficult road conditions was quite common).

Another, albeit indirect, way to assess the reliability of the report about the loss of 11 tanks in the battle near Alytus is to analyze the dynamics and chronology of the losses of the 7th TD in the first month of the war. In the report of the headquarters of the 3rd TGr dated July 7, the irretrievable losses of the 7th TD on June 30 (i.e., after the end of the battle for Minsk) amount to only 25 tanks (including 4 Pz-IVs, i.e. one has to assume that either the division did not lose a single “four” in the battles of June 23–30, or the report on losses in the battle near Alytus included damaged tanks suitable for repair). [366] Three weeks later, by July 21, the irretrievable losses of the division's tanks amounted to (excluding the losses of the “twos”) 46 units, c. including 5 Pz-IV. [367] On average, the 7th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht in the first month of the war irretrievably lost 1.5-2 tanks per day, and against this background it becomes clear why the “battle of Alytus” was included in the summary of the Panzer Group and was sent even higher, to the headquarters of Army Group

Center. The losses of Soviet tanks at Alytus in the railroad division of the 3rd TGr are estimated at 70 units, this figure is crossed out, and in the next phrase it increases to 80 . lost”? Aushrotas in his memoirs writes about 30 Soviet tanks frozen on the battlefield near the Kanyukai bridge. Yes, memory can fail a person, but information about military graves indirectly confirms this figure: on the ground, about 1 km from the coast, there were burials of 39 Red Army soldiers. Here, however, we must also take into account that, according to the stories of local residents who took part in the burial of Soviet soldiers, only charred remains were removed from some burnt tanks, and they were buried directly near the tanks; these unmarked graves were subsequently not taken into account in the census of military graves. [348] In any case, there is a certain

similarity in the sad proportion of losses of tanks and tankers (11 and 18 for the Germans, 30 and more than 39 on the

Soviet side). With some exaggeration, it can be assumed that not 30, but 35, 40, 45 Soviet tanks were lost in the battle near Kanyukai. Where do the rest go? In the Muizelenai area, there were charred skeletons of 4–5 tanks that had come under attack from German aircraft. The mark of 80 units is still very far away. The simplest and most plausible assumption, in my opinion, is that in the area of Alytus and its environs the Germans actually discovered 80 Soviet tanks and, with a clear conscience, combined the tanks knocked out in battle and tanks abandoned without a fight; and in the end, isn't an abandoned enemy tank a legitimate trophy?

Was the main striking force of the 5th TD, 50 T-34 tanks, used? The basis for a negative answer to such a question can be not only the final result of the battle (it is difficult to imagine a situation where a meeting of the T-34 with light "Czechs" could end like this), but also the absence of any mention of a new, unknown type of Soviet tank in Wehrmacht documents. Neither the ZhBD of the 3rd TGr, nor the documents of the 7th Panzer Division and its units (including, quite revealingly, the reports of the anti-tank battalion!) contain a word about the appearance of an unfamiliar enemy tank on the battlefield. The well-known photographs of the T-34 tanks knocked out near the Kanyukai bridge are not visible. As for

the above-cited memoirs of Aushrotas (***“about 30 Soviet T-34s or a similar type of tanks”***), then, most likely, he took tanks of a very similar external type for the T-34, namely the BT-7 (the main tank in terms of numbers in 5th TD). What immediately catches the eye of an outside observer - a strong displacement of the turret into the bow of the tank, large, "full-track" rollers, inclined hull sheets, the conical shape of the turret - these tanks are very similar; in order to distinguish the BT-7 from the T-34, you need to look carefully, and even know what to look at. Let's not forget that on the third day of the war, Aushrotas imagined the appearance of the "thirty-four" much worse than any modern schoolboy who saw this tank hundreds of times in the cinema, in the park, in a book, on a postcard for Victory Day ... As if however, even after the loss of 80 tanks, the

5th Panzer Division should have still had about 170 tanks in service. In terms of quantity, this is more than it was in any of the tank divisions of the 1st TGr of the Wehrmacht, in terms of quality (taking into account the presence of several dozen T-34s) it is much better. However, the combat path of the 5th TD, so successfully launched in the days of the Great Liberation Campaign, ended with a collision with German tanks near Alytus. Yes, formally the division was still listed in

lists of combat strength, but an organized and combat-ready formation no longer existed. The journal of military operations of the North-Western Front said this quite frankly: ***“Units of the 5th TD, repeatedly bombarded from the air, took battle [against] the enemy’s motorized units, having been defeated, began an unorganized withdrawal from the Alytus region to Kaunas and Vilna.” [368]***

From Alytus to Vilnius, the German tank divisions passed by two routes: the 20th Panzer Division moved along a country road through Onushkis, Rudishkes, bypassing the impenetrable forest massif (Puscha Rudnichka) south of Vilnius from the north-west; The 7th TD went strictly to the east, through the Daugai, Valkininkai, leaving through the forest on the so-called. "Pilsudski tract" (road Grodno, Eishishkes, Vilnius). By the evening of June 23, both divisions reached the suburbs of Vilnius, covering about 70-80 km in a day - a fact that clearly indicates the absence of organized resistance. At the same time, as far as can be judged from the railroad track of the 3rd TGr, on each of the routes there were clashes with scattered remnants of the 5th Panzer Division:

“June 23,

09.00. The 7th Panzer Division of the 39th Panzer Corps goes on the offensive on Valkininkai, the "Pilsudski Tract" from the bridgehead at Alytus, where single fire is still being carried out. After liberating the bridge at Alytus and providing fuel, the 20th Panzer Division should also advance in the direction of Butrimonis.

12.40.

7th TD near Valkininkai again meets individual enemy tanks and after a short battle continues to march east to the “Pilsudski tract” in order to move along this road to Vilnius.

18.30.

7 TD is fighting with the enemy in the south-west of Vilnius. Enter the city will not succeed this evening. June

24, 07.50. On the evening of June 23, 1941, the 7th Panzer Division fought a successful battle southwest of Vilnius and entered the city, which by that time had already been abandoned by the enemy ... On the route of the 20th Panzer Division to Rudiškys, Vilnius, the enemy abandoned a large number of aircraft in complete confusion and guns. The 20th Panzer Division, which advanced in the evening of 23.6 to Rudiskes (southwest of Vilnius), on June 24 advances through Trakai, the southern outskirts of Vilnius in the direction of Oshmyany ... "[353]

In the "History of the Battle Route" of the 21st Tank Regiment, the 20th Tank Division march to Vilnius

is described as follows: **"About 9 o'clock on June 23, the regiment goes to Vilnius. In the order of battle of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd battalions, a wild race begins, and the regiment is greatly stretched. The 5th company meets enemy tanks in Onushkis and around it, knocks out a few, others leave. The 2nd Battalion was subjected to machine gun and bomb attacks from the air, which, however, did no harm. At Rudiskis, the 1st battalion ran into enemy resistance, knocked out 2 tanks and hit the shooters. The 3rd battalion in the battle in the Rudiskis area** (this battle is also mentioned in Operational Report No. 5 of the NWF headquarters as the actions of the 5th tank division. - **M.S.) loses two Pz-IVs and knocks out several enemy tanks. These were the first losses of tanks in the regiment** (another confirmation of the lack of combat and losses during the capture of the "northern" bridge and the airfield in Alytus. - **M.S.)**". And this time there is no

mention of a meeting with T-34 tanks. The first tank of this type was discovered much later, in Minsk, and this event, of course, was reflected in the history of the regiment : **T-34. There was surprise about this, since we did not suspect the existence of this type of tank. The regiment later encountered these tanks more often than he**

wanted."

On June 24, units of the 7th TD were the first to enter Vilnius. In the report of the headquarters of the anti-tank battalion of the division, this event - the capture of the capital of the "union republic", the first since the beginning of the war, is described quite casually: **"The 1st company, together with a reinforced company of motorcyclists, seized Vilnius with a sudden blow between 5 and 6 o'clock. The local airfield was also captured with more than 30 aircraft. [369]** At 09:30, the 1st battalion of the division's tank regiment also entered the city. The losses of the 7th TD in two days (June 23 and 24) of the offensive from Alytus to Vilnius were: 1 killed, 6 wounded in a motorcycle battalion, 5 killed, 26 wounded in a reconnaissance battalion, 5 killed, 15 wounded, 4 missing in a tank shelf; reports of other units and divisions of the division do not contain information about losses. **[370]**

The enemy suffered much greater losses only on the pages of the ZhBD of the 5th howitzer regiment:

"18.00. The regiment with the battle reached the edge of the forest st. Ponary (i.e., from the evening of June 22, he walked more than 75 km. - **M.S.) , where he took up battle formation and opened fire with direct fire on the enemy tanks and motorized infantry that had broken through with a strength of up to one tank regiment with artillery and infantry. The enemy, carried away by the pursuit, did not have time to**

order; the regiment opened heavy fire, as a result of which the regiment destroyed up to two battalions of enemy tanks, 4 anti-tank batteries, 4 mortar batteries, 6 heavy machine guns. Our losses: 12 guns with tractors were destroyed. [371] A brief

summary of the combat operations of the 5th Panzer Division was summed up on July 2, 1941 in the report of the head of the NWF Armored Directorate as

follows: " From **4.15 a.m. to 9 a.m.** Soviet commanders, then for Soviet "historians" - **M.S.), and by the end of the day the 5th Panzer Division was surrounded by the enemy** ("surrounded" could only be the 20th TD, whose personnel were bathing at that time in a barrel and did not lose a single tank in battle. - **M.S.) . On the night of June 23, 1941, the 5th TD with the remains of tanks (38) and a howitzer artillery regiment left the encirclement and concentrated in the forest area 10–15 km southeast of Vilnius. On June 24, 1941, in the Vilnius region, it was surrounded by the enemy and dispersed. The remaining fighters and commanders only began to appear in the Polotsk region on June 26, 1941** (200 km northeast of Vilnius. - **M.S.) and on June 30, 41 in the Pskov region. The material part of the combat vehicles was completely destroyed or left on the territory of the enemy ... "** [372] Strictly speaking, this report only testifies to

the absence at the headquarters of the North-Western Front of information about the condition and location of the remnants of the division (which absence, in turn, indicates the complete and the final collapse of the division). Judging by the crumbs of reliable data available, the remnants of the division did not roll back to the northeast (to Polotsk and Pskov), but to the southeast, to Molodechno, in the zone of the Western Front. According to the ZhBD of the 5th howitzer regiment, at noon on June 25, the remaining guns and people ended up in the city of Smorgon (75 km southeast of Vilnius), then, by 18-00 on June 26, they retreated to Molodechno (40 km along the highway from Smorgon); On June 27, the remnants of the regiment (three fire platoons with 5 howitzers) reached the river. The Berezina near the city of Borisov is a stunning march pace for heavy guns towed by low-speed tracked tractors, for from Molodechno to Borisov along the shortest road through Vileyka, Pleschenitsa is gaining more than 140 km.

Army General S.P. Ivanov (at the beginning of the war - lieutenant colonel, deputy chief of staff of the 13th Army of the Western Front) writes in his memoirs that at the location of the Army headquarters near the city of Molodechno, the commander of the 5th tank division, Colonel F.F. Fedorov with a group of tanks and armored vehicles turned up already in the early morning of June

Molodechno 170 (one hundred and seventy) km in a straight line; if Fedorov was able to carry out such a forced march in one day, then this means that Vilnius did not have him, and he left his division already somewhere near Alytus. I would like to think that the author of the memoirs let his memory down and in fact the commander retreated along with the remnants of his division, and the described meeting at the headquarters of the 13th Army near Molodechno took place at dawn on June 25, and not on June 24. Alas, in the Combat Order No. 1 of the headquarters of the 13th Army of June 24, the 5th Panzer Division is mentioned (it was assigned a combat mission). [374] This gives serious grounds to assume that General Ivanov was not mistaken and by the morning of June 24, the commander of the 5th TD actually ran to Molodechno

[122]. **"It's an irreparable problem."** Tanker lamented, **"and I will have to pay for it with my head."** So describes S.P. Ivanov his conversation with Fedorov, but in this forecast the division commander was radically mistaken. In the general chaos of the catastrophe of the two fronts (North-Western and Western), the "minor episode" with the defeat of one of the many tank divisions went unnoticed. After the official disbandment of the 5th TD (this happened on July 18), Fedorov commanded other formations for some time, and then ended up in the deepest rear (Ural Military District), as head of the Solikamsk military school.

A few years after the defeat of the 5th Panzer Division, the amazing exploits of its commander became known. In the submission for awarding the Order of the Patriotic War of the 1st degree, signed by the deputy commander of the Ural Military District on July 5, 1944, it is reported that comrade. Fedorov Fedor Fedorovich **"June 26, 41 in the battle on the North. Zap. On the outskirts of Vilna, he personally destroyed 6 enemy tanks from his command tank. 5.7.41, being wounded in battle near St. Krupki (Belarusian SSR), did not leave the battlefield and continued to command the division wounded. During the 2 months of the beginning of the Patriotic War, under the onslaught of superior enemy forces, with heavy losses in people and equipment, commanding a tank division, he held back the enemy's offensive, which made it possible for the command of the Western Front to pull up [reserves] and stop the enemy in the Smolensk and Yelnya region "**. Here, it turns out, what made it possible to stop the Germans at Smolensk! Not five Armies of the Second Strategic Echelon, but the crushing blows of Fedorov's division, which melted away in the first two days of the war ... For the sake of truth, we immediately note that our

subordinates comrade. Fedorov did not forget. So, on October 6, 1943, he signed a submission for the award of the gold star of the Hero of the Soviet Union to the tank commander of the control platoon of his former division. It turns out that **"June 25, 1941, as a tank commander of the command of the 5th division, in the battle of Rudzishki**

(20 km southwest of Vilna) comrade. N. destroyed 12 enemy tanks from the division commander's tank. While fighting, in the future, so-called. N. on the same day destroyed 3 more enemy tanks and 10 anti-tank guns. The brave shooter tanker t. N. brought complete disorder to the advancing advance detachment of the 19th enemy TD and gave the division command a full opportunity to organize the defense of the city of Vilna and take control of the division in battle. Thanks to the skillful and heroic actions of the crew, the enemy was detained for 2 days by large forces. The entire USSR, thanks to the posters issued by the Soviet Information Bureau, knows about the heroic act of Comrade N. and his courage in the first days of World War II.

The mention of the poster is apparently due to the fact that no other documentary evidence was found. I hope the attentive reader has already estimated the date of the battle, the number of the enemy division, and the German tanks stopped near Vilnius for 2 days. On my own behalf, I'll add that as of June 30, 1941 (that is, after a fierce battle on the outskirts of Minsk), the irretrievable losses of the 20th German Panzer Division amounted to: 5 Pz-IV, 7 Pz-38 (t), 3 Pz-I. [366]

If this was written in official documents, then is it any wonder that at the beginning of the 21st century in Russia, under the guise of "historical research", Mr. D. Egorov publishes the following:

"The capture of Alytus was given to the Nazis by no means "little" blood, no matter what Goth in his memoirs underestimated. The Germans won the battle, but for some reason they kept silent about their true losses. On June 23, the headquarters of the GA "Center" did not receive any data on the losses of the 3rd TGr. Why did Hoth in his memoirs and his headquarters - in the reports - keep silent about the losses on June 23, that is the question? The only thing that can be assumed is that the victory was "Pyrrhic". Fifty of the T-34s available in the Soviet division could not help but "ruin the holiday" for the Wehrmacht tankmen, accustomed to easy victories, but Goth did not seem to see them at Alytus. Information (more correctly, memoirs published in the USSR. - M.S.) Rotmistrov about 170 tanks and armored personnel carriers of the enemy knocked out and burned only on June 22, historians unanimously considered a tenfold exaggeration. And why is it necessary to ten, and not two or three times? What, exactly, is the point? Have we had enough humiliation for that terrible June? Why am I saying all this? To bring the reader to the thought: we were played, we were "made like villagers." THEIR losses in

Behind the Neman

The advance of the 39th Panzer Corps of the Wehrmacht towards Vilnius was held back by bad roads and the 5th Panzer Division; no matter how limited this opposition was, it led to some slowdown in the pace of the march (all the same, the Germans failed to take Vilnius on the evening of June 23, and pulling up the lagging units of the 7th and 20th tank divisions to the city took the whole day of June 24). The 12th Panzer Division of the 57th Panzer Corps had at its disposal the Merkinė, Orana, Eišiškės highways and there was practically no armed enemy.

Yes, theoretically in Orany there was the 184th rifle division and the 429th howitzer regiment of the RGK; in practice, the division, formed from the military personnel of the former Lithuanian army, partially fled, some went over to the Germans with weapons in their hands, and all the remaining command of the NWF was hastily withdrawn to the east. As for the artillery regiment (and this is at least 36 152-mm howitzers), it disappeared "in English", without saying goodbye - neither in Soviet nor in German documents there is a word about its participation in hostilities. As a result, by the end of the day on June 23, German tanks reached the Vilnius-Lida road in the Voronovo area, and a day later the advance group of the 12th Panzer Division was already in Golshany (45 km east of Voronovo).

The unexpected and quick success again revived the old disputes about the depth and direction of the offensive of the 3rd Panzer Group: ***“During the discussions of the Barbarossa plan, the command of the Army Group Center and the 3rd TGr had different points of view about the continuation of the operation after crossing the Neman. The 3rd Panzer Group intended to immediately break through to the Western Dvina, without being involved in the performance of secondary tasks ... Upon reaching Vilnius on June 24, the command of the 3rd TGr, continuing to adhere to the opinion that enemy units retreated to the east and they must be pursued all the way to the Western Dvina, tried through the communications officer of the command of the Civil Aviation Center "Center" to convey his point of view to the command of the Civil Aviation. The command of the Army Group did not change its order to advance with the task for the 3rd TGr to take the heights in the Minsk region. [353]***

Orders were to be obeyed, and motorized formations of the 3rd Tank Group began to turn to the southeast to attack Minsk along the Golshany, Volozhin and Smorgon, Molodechno roads. By the morning of June 25, the first echelon of the 3rd TGr basically left the territory of the Lithuanian SSR and continued the offensive, finding itself in the deep rear of the troops of the Western Front. And the divisions of the southern wing of the North-Western Front, demolished by the hurricane of the German offensive, still c

On the evening of June 24, the headquarters of the NWF withdrew to Daugavpils (155 km northeast of Vilnius), before sending an order to the 11th Army to withdraw the remnants of the troops to the Kedainiai, Shvenchenis line (35–70 km northeast of the Kaunas, Vilnius line); Front aviation was ordered **to “destroy all military installations in Koenigsberg, Danzig and Memel and bridges across the river. Neman. [375]** There was no one to carry out these orders (and even simply broadcast them to lower headquarters). On June 26, at 20:35, the NWF command reported to Moscow: **“The 5th, 33rd, 188th, 128th rifle divisions are unknown in what condition and where they are. There are many stragglers and runaways who are being detained [on] the direction of Dvinsk. Many weapons were thrown. The 11th Army is not an organized, combat-ready**

formation.” [376] A few hours earlier (at 4:25 pm), the General Staff received a ciphertext signed by all three members of the NWF Military Council with the following content: **“To the People’s Commissar of Defense of the USSR. According to a number of obvious facts, the headquarters of the 11th Army was captured or captured (as in the text. - M.S.) cipher documents. For two days, fabricated cipher telegrams have been coming from the headquarters of the 11th Army. The reconnaissance sent by me repeatedly (23, 24, 25) could not get in touch with the headquarters of the 11th Army ... ” [377]**

A few days later, the headquarters of the 11th Army was found; he was not captured, it’s just that his reports differed so much from the expectations of the front headquarters (not to mention the pre-war plans for a defensive opera

Chapter 3.3 Brest

The words "Brest", "Brest Fortress" are the first to pop up in the memory of the Soviet / Russian reader when it comes to the initial period of the war. We will not try to break a stable tradition either, and we will begin our consideration of the military operations of the troops of the Western Front from the Brest direction, that is, from the history of the defeat of the 4th Army. This story can serve as an extremely clear illustration of the riddles of the "great game" that Stalin played in June 1941, and of its (the game's) consequences.

"The main drawback of the plans was their unreality ..." In all known versions of the strategic deployment plan developed in the winter - spring of 1941, the left (southern) flank of the Western Front was to become the direction of one of the main attacks of the Red Army. In particular, on the map dated May 15, signed by Vasilevsky with his own hand, two red "arrows" are clearly visible, which stretch from the southern contour of the "Bialystok ledge" to Warsaw and Demblin. (Fig. 26.) In each of these two operational directions, it was supposed to deploy one Army (13th and 4th), and the 4th Army (headquarters in the city of Kobrin) was supposed to be the most powerful (it was supposed to include include two mechanized corps).

The orientation of the combat training of the command and staffs of the 4th Army was fully consistent with such plans. Colonel-General Sandalov (on the eve of the war - Colonel, Chief of Staff of the 4th Army) in his military-historical study, under the heading "secretly" published in 1961, writes without a shadow of embarrassment or doubt: "All pre-

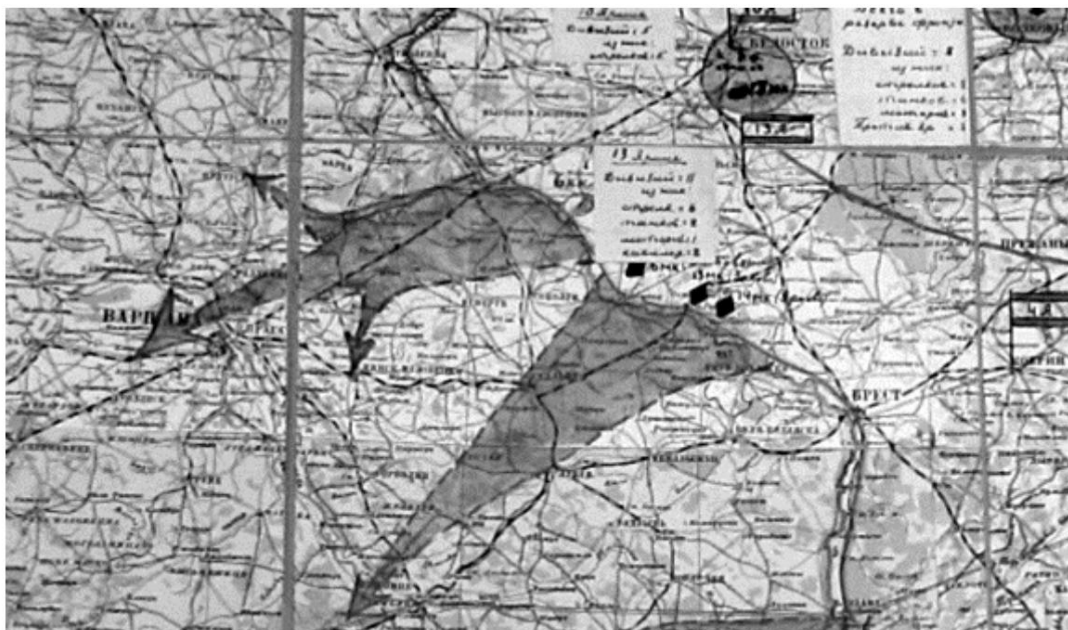
war exercises, according to their plans **and The implementation focused the troops mainly on the implementation of a breakthrough fortified positions. Maneuverable offensive actions, oncoming battles, organization and conduct of defense in difficult conditions of the situation were almost not practiced ... In March-April 1941, the headquarters of the 4th Army participated in the district operational map game in Minsk. A front-line offensive operation was being worked out from the territory of Western Belarus in the direction**

of Bialystok, Warsaw ... At the end of May, an army field trip was carried out, ending with a game of cards. The offensive operation from the area of Pruzhany, Antopol, Bereza-Kartuzskaya in the direction of Brest, Byala Podlyaska was lost ... On the eve of the war, on June 21, 1941, the ongoing

the army headquarters a two-stage command and staff exercise of the 28th rifle corps on the topic "The offensive of the rifle corps with overcoming the river barrier" ... For the last week of June,

the district headquarters was preparing a game with the headquarters of the 4th army also for an offensive operation. In addition, the measures taken, especially the formation of mechanized corps and artillery regiments of the RGK, were subordinated only to the interests of the offensive, without taking into account that they would also have to conduct defense ... "[378]

By the way, about the artillery regiments of the RGK. With the beginning of the war, the 120th howitzer regiment of high power of the RGK, the "old" personnel regiment (formed in 1929), which managed to take part in two "liberation campaigns" (in Poland and Bukovina) was supposed to be operationally subordinated to the command of the 4th Army with the beginning of the war . The mood of the officers was quite consistent with the plans of the high command - a few days before June 22, 1941, the political officer of the regiment, battalion commissar Rusakov explained to the wives of the commanders the "current moment" with the following words: "Well, what are you worried about ? ***Do you feel bad here? [123] The mess will start - you will live in Warsaw or Berlin. [379]***



Rice. 26. "May variant", map signed by Vasilevsky
May 15, 1941

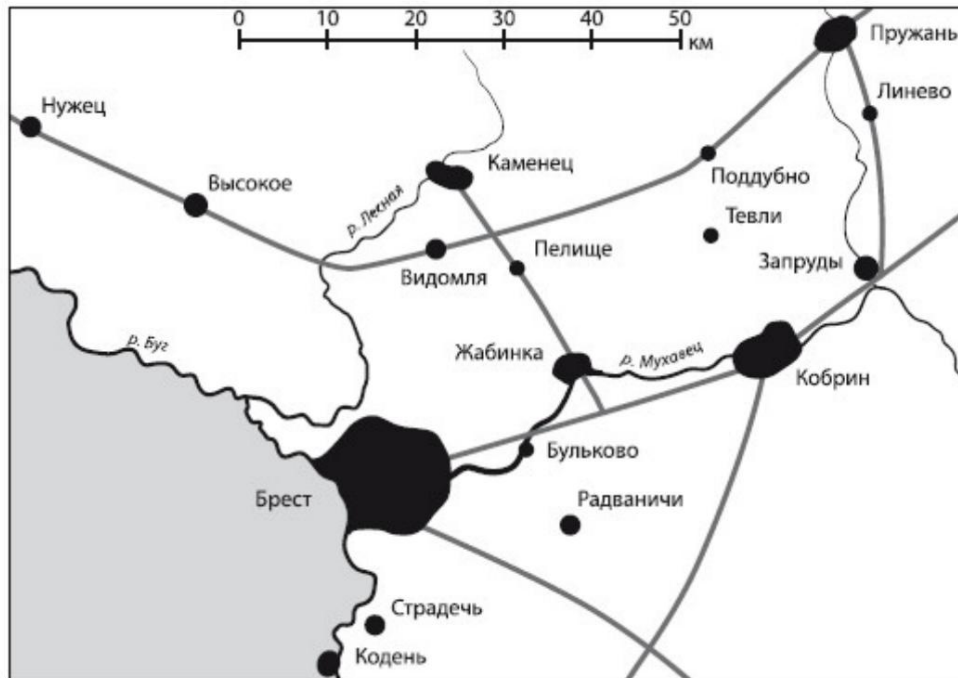
With all this, the actual state of the 4th Army by mid-June 1941 was depressing. The "shock army" included only four rifle divisions and one (14th) mechanized corps, equipped with light and technically obsolete T-26 tanks, and even then only half of the regular strength. Intended for inclusion in the 4th Army

The 100th Rifle Division was located in the Minsk region and, according to the plan, was supposed to arrive in the 4th Army zone only by the end of the third day of mobilization; The 47th Rifle Corps, whose divisions were stationed in the Baranovichi, Slutsk area, was not planned to be included in the 4th Army even on paper. The right neighbor (13th Army) was practically absent, the alleged headquarters of the future Army was in Mogilev (500 km east of the border), and when, finally, the headquarters of the 13th Army began to move (June 16), it moved to Belsk in some very strange way, with a stop in Novogrudok and further movement in the opposite direction from Belsk, to Molodechno ... But, perhaps, the strategic plans of the high

command of the Red Army underwent a radical change, and at some point in time between May 15 and On June 22, a new plan, not yet revealed in the archives, appeared, within the framework of which the 4th Army was to conduct a stubborn defense? Alas, the 4th Army was even worse prepared for defense than for the offensive. There was not a single anti-tank artillery brigade in the 4th Army (and in this sense, the Army turned out to be the only one along the entire length of the Soviet-German border). Of the four rifle divisions, two (6th and 42nd) were deployed at the very line of border pillars, in Brest, and at least half of the forces and means of these divisions were squeezed into a patch of the Brest Fortress - in the event of a sudden first strike by the enemy, these divisions were doomed to destruction. Of the three divisions of the 14th mechanized corps, one (22nd TD) was also located at the very

border, in a military town south of Brest, perfectly visible from the western bank of the Bug. Insane arrogance reached the point that, according to the cover plan, the 22nd TD was supposed to go to the concentration area near the Zhabinka cape and to the north, i.e., moving northeast of the border, cross the river. Mukhavets, cross the road Brest, Kobrin ("Warsaw highway") and two railway lines, thereby paralyzing all traffic in the Brest area for several hours. (Fig. 27.) A highly experienced staff officer, Colonel-General Sandalov, in his book, of course, refrained from using the word "madness", replacing it

with two luxurious phrases: "The main drawback of the district and army plans was their unreality ... Such planning for the concentration of troops **to frontier was doomed to failure.** [378] Clearly and directly, in a military way to explain to readers that **the invasion of the enemy during the development of the plan was not foreseen**, the honored military general did not dare.



Rice. 27. War zone of the 4th Army

The enemy approached the matter much more seriously. The most powerful 2nd Tank Group was concentrated in the zone of the main attack (the main one on the scale of the entire Eastern Front): five tank divisions, a thousand tanks, including 138 Pz-IV and 381 Pz-III of the latest modifications, with reinforced frontal armor and 50 -mm cannon; five thousand medium tanks in one operational direction - the Germans had nowhere else like this. Of the five tank divisions, three (3rd, 4th and 10th) already had real combat experience. In a word, the Brest direction became the only point on the map of the Eastern Front where the Wehrmacht really had both quantitative and qualitative superiority in tanks. The infantry at the southern contour of the "Bialystok ledge" the Germans concentrated so much that in the first days of the war this cluster of divisions simply did not fit on the existing roads and "road directions".

With such a balance of forces, the defeat of the 4th Army was, alas, inevitable. The only thing that could be changed was the rate of defeat and, accordingly, the rate of advance of the enemy's motorized formations deep into Belarus. In solving this problem, the 4th Army had three "allies". Firstly, the full-flowing river Bug, a natural barrier of operational importance, through which hundreds of thousands of people and a thousand tanks, and even in the presence of active opposition, would be very difficult to move. Secondly, 128 (and this is the minimum of the currently known figures) completed by the construction of bunkers in the Brest UR, 49 of which

special weapons and equipment have already been installed; concentrated in 10 defense nodes, they made it possible to block the main road directions in the border strip with fire. Thirdly, wooded and swampy terrain, difficult or not passable at all for wheeled vehicles; in fact, in the Brest-Baranovichi strip there were only two highways, in a number of places surrounded by impassable bogs for tens of kilometers. (Fig. 13.)

“Today the enemy is fifteen kilometers away from you. This, comrade Momysh-Uly, is very close when there is no resistance, and very far away when every wood, every hillock resists. Such words in A. Beck's story "Volokolamsk Highway" are spoken by the legendary General Panfilov [124]. From Brest to the river. Shchara is not 15, but 150 km along the shortest straight line. Under the conditions named by Panfilov (***“when every wood, every hillock resists”***), the Germans could be detained in this area for several weeks; however, so much was not required, and for the deployment of the second echelons of the troops of the Western Front on the natural defensive line of the river. The char would be enough for 3-4 days. In reality, however, everything happened

quite

differently. **Day One** Unlike the Baltic OVO (North-Western Front), where the actual raising of troops on combat alert began on June 16-18, the situation in the Western OVO cannot be described in such an unambiguous way. There are almost no primary documents available for study, or none at all. The combat log of the Western Front was compiled retroactively and in a situation where many actors had a serious desire to "correct" the history of the defeat of the front. If we believe what Sandalov wrote in 1961, then in the 4th Army short-sighted (or demonstrative?) carelessness reached extraordinary proportions: "On June 21, neither

the command of the 4th Army, nor the commanders of formations and units, ***nor the Soviet and party organizations of the Brest region did not expect the invasion of the Nazi troops and did not think that it would happen in a few hours. Therefore, no measures were taken to bring the troops to combat readiness on the evening of June 21 in the Brest direction. Two days earlier, on June 19, an expanded plenum of the regional party committee was held, which was attended by a large number of army political workers ... To the questions of the plenum participants, is it possible to send families from Brest to the east, the secretary of the regional committee replied that this should not be done, so as not to cause unwanted moods ...*** "

Closer to midnight, the command gathered at the headquarters of the Army in the city of Kobrin. No one had to sleep in the truest sense of the word that fateful night. According to Sandalov, ***“At about 2 am on June 22, the wire connection of the army headquarters with the district and the troops was cut off. Communication was restored only at 3 hours 30 minutes. A gust of wires was discovered by our signalmen in Zapрудy and Zhabinka. After the restoration of communication, the army commander received an order transmitted in plain text by telegraph (BODO) from the commander of the Western OVO troops to put the troops on combat readiness. At the same time, it was indicated, first of all, to silently withdraw the 42nd Infantry Division from the Brest Fortress in "packs" and put the 14th Mechanized Corps on alert. [378]***

Sandalov wrote the book 20 years after the events discussed, the arrested commander of the Western Front, General of the Army Pavlov, testified a few weeks after the start of the war. In the protocol of the first interrogation (dated July 7), he describes the events somewhat differently:

“According to the instructions of the people's commissar, I immediately called all the commanders of the armies to the HF apparatus, ordering them to appear at the army headquarters along with the chiefs of staff and operational departments. I also suggested that the commanders bring the troops into a combat state (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) and occupy all military-type structures and even unfinished reinforced concrete ones. Korobkov, commander of the 4th Army, reported that his troops were ready for battle. He promised to check the combat readiness of the Brest garrison. To this, I pointed out to Korobkov that the garrison should be in the place where it was supposed to be according to the plan, and offered to proceed with the execution of my order immediately. This conversation with the command

At 3 hours 30 min. People's Commissar of Defense called me on the phone again and asked: what's new? I answered him that now there is nothing new, I have established contact with the armies and the corresponding instructions have been given to the commanders. Over the next 15 minutes, I received the following information from the commanders: from the 4th Army - "everywhere and everything is calm, the troops are fulfilling the task you set." When I asked if the 22nd Panzer Division was leaving Brest, I received the answer: “Yes, it is leaving, like other units” (emphasis added

They shot both Pavlov and Korobkov. It will never be known which of them was more to blame, but no one withdrew troops from the Brest Fortress (as well as from the southern military town). There they were, sleeping in overcrowded barracks, and covered with a flurry of German artillery fire.

The Wehrmacht command concentrated a powerful artillery group against the Brest Fortress, corresponding to the complexity of the task (***“the core of the fortress was its citadel, located on an island washed from the southwest by the Western Bug, and from the south and north by the branches of the Mukhavets River. The annular wall of the citadel was a brick two-story barracks with 500 casemates to accommodate troops. Under the casemates were warehouses, and below - a network of underground passages... The ring of bastions with fortifications, barracks and warehouses was the outer cover of the citadel. On the outer side of this ring, a massive earthen rampart ten meters high stretched for more than 6 km, which was the outer wall of the entire fortress. The earthen rampart was surrounded by the branches of the Western Bug and Mukhavets, canals and wide ditches filled with water”***). In addition to the own artillery regiment of the 45th Infantry Division that stormed the fortress, three divisions of heavy 210-mm howitzers and 9 batteries of Nebelwerfer rocket launchers (including heavy ones with 280 mm and 320 mm caliber rockets) were involved [125]. To destroy the underground casemates, it was decided to use two installations of self-propelled 600-mm mortars - a monster weighing 126 tons, capable of throwing shells weighing 1.2 to 2.2 tons

Of course, the concepts of “a lot” and “little” strongly depend on which side of the front you look at the numbers from. The Germans believed (which can be read in the very first lines of the report of the commander of the 45th Infantry Division) that they had little artillery: ***“The artillery offensive plan was developed not so much with the expectation of its actual impact, as for surprise ... Despite numerous requests division, the equipment was insufficient, and shelling could not be long-term ... The fact that heavy rocket launchers are not capable of destroying cellars and other shelters of the fortress was known and repeatedly emphasized by the division commander ...”*** [380] The use of 600- mm mortar. On the first day, they fired a total of only 7 shots - after which both installations failed; On June 23, 7 more shells were fired, on June 24 - 17, two shells did not explode [126]. All these, both real and invented in the desire to justify themselves for heavy losses, the shortcomings of the artillery

preparation for the assault were more than "compensated" by the way the Soviet command used the Brest Fortress. Sandalov writes quite frankly about this: ***“A large number of personnel of the units of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions remained in the fortress, not because they had the task of defending the fortress, but because they could not leave it.”*** It is understandable - every fortress

built in such a way that it is difficult to enter; It was no easier to withdraw a crowd of many thousands under enemy fire through the "needle eye" of the gate in the fortress wall. Parts of two

rifle divisions, as well as the 33rd engineering regiment, the district military hospital, units of the NKVD troops, a large number of command personnel with families (!) Were trapped simply because it was decided to use the fortress buildings located at a distance of a rifle shot from the border as barracks fund. Neither the two years spent in the "liberated" territory of eastern Poland, nor the stream of alarming intelligence reports that came in a wave in the last days before the war, helped the command of the Western OVO and the 4th Army to make an obvious decision and find another site to accommodate personnel, not at the very border posts. At the time the shelling began, units of the 6th and 42nd divisions were in

the Brest Fortress, consisting of about 10 rifle battalions, one artillery regiment, 4 separate battalions (communications, intelligence, anti-tank defense, air defense); the commanding staff was partly in the fortress, partly in apartments in the city of Brest. In those units where it was possible to maintain minimal order and manageability, the commanders tried to fulfill the task well known to them - on combat alert, withdraw subordinates from the barracks to the areas of concentration, which areas were all outside the fortress, and for the 42nd Rifle Division, it was completely ten kilometers away. from the fortress. Where people were seized by understandable panic in such a situation, the crowd rushed randomly from the barracks to the gates. In both cases, a huge mass of people found themselves in open space, where they were mercilessly destroyed by the fire of German artillery. According to numerous testimonies of survivors, the entire courtyard of the fortress was literally littered with corpses.

No one will be able to establish the exact figures of losses today. Some idea of the scale of the defeat can be given by three figures from the report of the 45th German Infantry Division: 14,576 rifles and 1,327 machine guns were captured in Brest and the Brest Fortress, 7,223 people were taken prisoner. [380] The entry in the Journal of Combat Operations of the Western Front is extremely laconic: ***"Two full-blooded divisions (12 thousand personnel), the 6th and 42nd, concentrated in the Brest fortress, suffered heavy losses when leaving the fortress and left disorganized, leaving a large amount of materiel and all stocks.***

[381] While the two divisions concentrated in the Brest area perished under artillery fire or turned into an uncontrollable crowd, the Germans quickly and successfully solved their primary tasks:

“The surprise that artillery fire and rocket mortars had on the Russians, as well as the very vigorously carried out infantry offensive, initially led to the following results: 1) The railway

bridge across the river. The Bug was taken as a result of a daring sortie, the explosive was removed, and the bridge, along with another smaller bridge, was protected from destruction. The transition of troops along the railway

bridge became possible. 2) The offensive of the 130th Infantry Regiment south of the fortress and the city of Brest-Litovsk led to the fact that until lunchtime the bridges across the river, important for the passage of the first tank column, were occupied intact. Mukhavets southwest and southeast of the city; assault boats of the 81st engineer battalion, which went up the river. Mukhavets, played a

significant role in the capture of bridges ... 3) The bridge over the river. The bug on the southern outskirts of the fortress was quickly built; in addition, the 81st sapper battalion, under enemy fire, built an 8-ton temporary bridge

The combat journal of the Western Front states: ***“The garrison of the Brest fortress (42nd and 6th rifle divisions) suffered heavy damage from enemy aviation and artillery, as a result of which the 6th rifle division was forced to 7.00 22.6. surrender Brest with battles, and scattered units of the 42nd Rifle Division gather at the turn ...*** (the following is a list of toponyms 10–15 km northeast of Brest)”. Strictly speaking, everything that the Germans needed in Brest - the bridges over the Bug and the exit to the Varshavskoe highway - they captured in the very first hours of the war. On the other hand, all these achievements remained under threat as long as the Red Army units that did not lay down

their arms remained in the Brest Fortress. The attempt to take the fortress by storm failed neither on the first nor on the second day - the heroic defenders continued their unparalleled stubborn resistance until the evening of June 29th. Even the enemy, who lost 1120 people killed and wounded in the battles for the Brest Fortress - a huge figure against the general background of the losses of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front - could not but recognize the courage of its defenders: “The Russians fought in Brest-Litovsk incredibly hardy and steadfastly, showed excellent ***soldierly training and for the most part showed a***

respectable readiness to fight. [380] The fate of the command was no less tragic. The commander of the 42nd Rifle Division, Major General Lazarenko, was arrested and on September 17, 1941, was sentenced to death by the Military Collegium of the USSR Armed Forces [127]. He was found guilty of the fact that ***“at the very first moment of the attack of the Nazi troops, he***

part of the troops of the division, weapons, food and clothing warehouses. Lazarenko did not give any instructions to the named units ... Instead of taking decisive measures to organize a rebuff to the enemy, he arbitrarily went to the corps headquarters to report on the situation, leaving at this crucial moment the surviving parts of the division without proper leadership.

[382] The commander of the 6th Infantry Division, Colonel Popsuy-Shapko, did not live until the autumn of 1941; according to some reports, he died in battle on July 31, while modern researchers report that he was arrested and shot for defeating a division in Brest. **[383]**

Just as successfully (for the enemy), the offensive began on other sectors of the front of the 4th Army. As Sandalov writes, **"in the army strip across the river. Bug, there were two railway (in Brest and Semyatich) and four road (Drohichin, Koden, Domachevo and Vlodava) serviceable and active bridges. These bridges were guarded by the 89th (Brest) Border Detachment, which, although it was included in Cover Area-4, did not receive any tasks to prepare these bridges for destruction. As a result, on the very first day of the war, all crossings and bridges across the river were captured by the enemy in good condition.** So, without a fight and resistance, the natural defensive line of the Bug River was lost.

Not much better was the use of a man-made defensive line - pillboxes of the Brest UR. For the most part, the Germans simply did not notice the existence of the fortified area. In the evening report of the command of the 4th Army of the Wehrmacht to the headquarters of the GA "Center" (by 20-30 on June 22), only a few words were given to him: **"Border fortifications were broken through in the areas of all corps."** **[384]** Sandalov describes the real reason for this with imperturbable calmness: **"Most of the personnel of the 17th battalion** (a separate artillery and machine-gun battalion, in total there were three such battalions in the 62nd Brest UR by the beginning of the war. - **M.S.) departed in the direction of Vysokoye, where the headquarters of the 62nd fortified area was located ... In the same direction, a group of personnel of the 18th pulp battalion from the Brest region retreated ... the day went to Belsk, and then further to the east ... "** **[378]**

Sandalov does not give any explanations (especially - assessments). "They were leaving ... they were leaving" - and that's it. Why was it necessary to build pillboxes, if in the very first hours of the war their garrisons "moved" 20 km from the concrete box? What was the commander of the fortified area going to find "further east"? It is possible that these questions were asked to General Puzyrev personally.

The answers are still unknown. ***“Born 1890 Commandant of the 62nd fortified area. Died November 18, 1941. There is no data on the place of burial ”*** - that's all that the completely official Military History Journal told its readers. How, where, under what circumstances, at the age of 51, General Puzyrev died - all this, even seven decades later, remains shrouded in the thick darkness of state secrets. And at

the same time, some units of the Brest UR offered the enemy fierce resistance. The Germans had already occupied Bialystok, Minsk and Bobruisk, and a group of fighters from the 17th battalion (the same one, most of whose personnel “withdrew” to the east) continued to hold several pillboxes in the Semyatyche area (where the Bug crosses the railway and the highway to Belsk). Field Marshal von Bock, commander of the GA Center, writes in his diary: ***“A hundred kilometers from the front line, in Semyatychi, the 293rd division continues to fight for several heavily fortified pillboxes, which it has to take by storm one by one. Despite the strongest artillery fire and the use of all modern means of destruction at our disposal, the garrisons of these pillboxes stubbornly refuse to surrender. [311]*** The garrisons of the last two bunkers (“Eagle” and “Fast”) under the command of Lieutenant I. Fedorov and Junior Lieutenant I. Shibakov fought until June 29, and only by surrounding the lonely concrete boxes, the Germans were able to bring down the floors with heavy land mines, buried under a handful of heroes. On the right (northern) flank of the 4th Army, the Wehrmacht infantry successfully

crossed the Bug and developed the offensive in a northeasterly direction; by the evening of June 22, the Germans reached the settlement. Nuzhets and Vysokoye, i.e., advanced 15–20 km during the day. The 49th Rifle Division opposing them turned out to be “ownerless” - according to the cover plan, it was supposed to be part of the 13th Army, and since the Army headquarters did not arrive in Belsk either on the first or on the following days of the war, the division turned out to be provided by itself yourself. Subsequently, the connection between the headquarters of the 4th Army and the 49th SD was finally lost, scattered units under the pressure of four German divisions (292nd Infantry Division, 252nd Infantry Division, 134th Infantry Division, 131st Infantry Division) were thrown back to Belovezhskaya Pushcha , where they finally “scattered”.

Commander of the 49th Rifle Division Colonel K.F. Vasiliev was taken prisoner. The Germans stumbled upon stubborn and fairly organized resistance only on the left (southern) flank of the 4th Army. There, among the forests and swamps of Polesye, the 75th Rifle Division (headquarters in the city of Malorita) took up defense. Despite the fact that the order to raise units on combat al

the division commander, Major General S. Nedvigin, was able to maintain order and controllability in the units. Having quickly overcome the first confusion (the record from 3-25 in the railway department of the 3rd Wehrmacht Panzer Division states "almost complete absence of resistance"), units of the 115th Infantry Regiment of the division entered the battle and held the border village and Stradech railway station for several hours. In the ZhBD of the 3rd TD of the Wehrmacht we read:

"05.35. The battalion under the command of Wellmann Station in Stradech did not occupied, but instead got bogged down in a fierce battle in front of the station building.

06.35. The battles for Stradech continue. As show big loss of the enemy, the last one fights to the last soldier..." [385]

For several days, the 75th Rifle Division held back the advance of three enemy divisions (1st Cavalry, 255th and 267th Infantry) at the turn of Malorita, Brest Highway, Kovel; On the operational maps of the German General Staff, the lagging behind of the southern flank of the strike group is clearly visible day by day, and in the Journal of Combat Operations 24 TK there are multiple entries such as "stubborn resistance of the enemy ***in the Malorita zone ... the offensive is moving very hard there.***" [405] Yes, of course, in such terrain (continuous forests and swamps) it's not painful to disperse, but no terrain alone can stop the enemy army ... On June 25, General Nedvigin's division was finally surrounded, the units that broke through the encirclement ring together with the division commander, they retreated to Pinsk and then through the endless forests of Polissya entered the zone of the 21st Army near the Dnieper.

In accordance with the plans of the Wehrmacht command, the main participant in the events of the first day of the war were to be four tank divisions of the 47th (17th TD, 18th TD) and 24th (3rd TD, 4th TD) tank corps. With the use of 24 TK, the Germans were clearly "too smart" - and in the same style as in the 3rd TGr. Instead of using the shortest route, through the Brest bridges, to reach the Varshavskoye highway, the 3rd and 4th tank divisions crossed across the Bug, 15–20 km south of Brest. After that, German tanks tried to move east of the river, to the Malorita-Kobrin road, but at the same time they got stuck tightly in the swampy area. Judging by the ZhBD of the 3rd TD, on the first day of the war, impassable terrain interfered with them much more than enemy resistance: ***"10.30. The 3rd motorcycle battalion reports that the "red" route of advance, passing east of the 2nd intermediate object, is impassable due to severe swampiness.***

11.00. The catastrophic state of the road network in this sector has caused numerous traffic jams. 14.30.

catastrophic off-road in the Faustynow area, which made any further progress in this sector impossible.

19.00. In the evening report to the headquarters of the corps, it was noted that the advance of the division was more delaying impassability than enemy resistance ...

” [385] In the end, it was decided to return back to the Bug, then go along the lane Stradech, Brest to Warsaw highway. By evening, the advanced units of the 3rd Panzer Division passed along the highway to Bulkovo, where they stumbled upon a destroyed bridge across the river. Mukhavets; the huge steel belt again froze in forced inactivity - and only the complete paralysis of control at the headquarters of the Air Force of the Western Front then saved the Germans from a crushing air strike. It would seem that there was an opportunity to crawl back, from Bulkovo to Brest, to return to the left (southern) bank of the river. Mukhavets and bypass the ill-fated bridge from the south - but this variant of movement was unacceptable, because in the strip from Bulkovo to Kobrin south of the Varshavskoe highway there was a solid swamp. For the movement of tanks, a road and

“20.10. A bridge with a carrying capacity of 16 tons is being built in the Bulkovo area. The construction of the bridge began with a great delay due to the fact that the crossing and bridge company of the 39th engineer battalion arrived very late. Only tanks with the possibility of underwater movement were able to force the river [Mukhavets] in this area at 22.00. They managed to break through to Kobrin without significant enemy resistance. The 3rd motorcycle battalion, which, advancing according to the plan, had already reached the route allocated for tank units, was able to break through to Zhabinka and capture the bridges in

the area .” [385] The offensive of the 17th and 18th Panzer Divisions north of Brest developed a little more successfully. The task was to reach the highway Vidomlya, Pruzhany, Slonim, and for this it was necessary to force the Bug and the Lesnaya river. By about 10 am, using tanks adapted for underwater movement, and thanks to the emergency work of sappers, both river barriers were forced; there was practically no resistance from the enemy (the Red Army), and there was no one to resist - between the defense sectors of the 49th and 42nd rifle divisions there was a many-kilometer gap, and the 42nd rifle division had not yet recovered from the massacre in the Brest Fortress.

By noon on June 22, the situation in the offensive zone of 47 TK began to change. In the Pelishche area, a meeting of forward detachments took place

18th Panzer Division and 30th Panzer Division of the 14th Mechanized Corps. In the report of Army Group Center, this was noted as **"a strong Russian tank attack . "** Despite the obvious technical superiority of medium German tanks over light T-26s, the advance of the 18th TD slowed down, and they did not go further than Pelishche that day. The main problems arose at crossings over the Bug. The Germans, apparently, were not familiar (more correctly, the command did not bother to get acquainted) with the peculiarities of movement along a meadow flooded with groundwater - it is enough to destroy the upper soil layer (turf) on it, and any wheeled vehicles get stuck on the hub. Trucks had to be dragged one by one by caterpillar tractors to the crossing, which increased the time for crossing the river beyond all measures. Finally, in the late afternoon, an overloaded bridge collapsed, which stopped the crossing for a full five hours. It remains to repeat once again that only the inaction of the Soviet aviation allowed the Germans to make such mistakes without losing people and equipment under the bombs [128].

Although there is no need to talk about any specific "front line" in relation to June 22, the approximate border of the advance of the 2nd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht and the infantry units attached to it can be called the line Vysokoye, Pelishche, Zhabinka, Radvanichi - all this is located in 20-30 km from the border. In comparison with the phenomenal breakthrough of the 3rd TGr to Alytus and the Orans, the successes of Guderian's subordinates turned out to be noticeably more modest. And this is in a situation where the command of the Red Army - both in Moscow and in Minsk - gave the enemy all the possible advantages of a sudden first strike.

"The retreat turned into a flight ..." By the evening of June 22, the situation in the defense zone of the 4th Army was as follows. On the right flank, at the junction with the 10th Army, the Wehrmacht infantry advanced almost unhindered into the depths of Soviet territory, but they had Belovezhskaya Pushcha ahead, in which the rate of advance of infantry with horse carts was bound to slow down. On the left flank, the 75th Rifle Division in stubborn battles held back the advance of the enemy, the wooded and swampy terrain also did not give the Germans a chance for a swift breakthrough to Pinsk. The situation in the center of the operational formation of the 4th Army was the most alarming: with all the delays and troubles, the enemy was still able to transport two infantry divisions and a significant part of the forces of four tank divisions across the Bug, and this "armored ram" had already reached two main roads (Vidomlya , Pruzhany and Brest, Kobrin).

What forces could the command of the 4th Army oppose to the enemy? Those parts of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions that were at the time of the start of the war in the Brest Fortress could already be written down in the list of losses - if there were still living people, then they either remained inside the "mousetrap", or in the form of a disorganized crowd retreated to the east. Not everyone fell into the trap, however. Outside the fortress remained: one rifle regiment (459th rifle regiment) and four rifle battalions from the 42nd and 6th rifle divisions, two artillery regiments of the 42nd rifle division and two corps artillery regiments (447th and 455th). In general, something like a rifle brigade is being recruited, reinforced by a powerful artillery group.

In the depths of the Army's formation, near Cape Kossovo (between two roads, 20 km southeast of Ruzhana), the 120th high-capacity howitzer regiment of the RGK was deployed, which had not yet suffered losses. By the beginning of the war, the regiment was armed with 36 203-mm howitzers and more than 2 thousand rounds for them, a supernumerary number of tractors and vehicles (including such a rare type of equipment for the Red Army as half-tracked all-terrain vehicles ZIS-33), 2171 personnel. With proper use, one such regiment could turn a column of German tanks crawling along narrow forest roads into a large dump of burnt scrap metal.

The main reserve of the Army remained the 14th mechanized corps. The 30th Panzer Division from the area of permanent deployment (Pruzhan) advanced along the highway to Pelishche, where advanced detachments entered into battle with enemy tank units; The 205th motorized division remained in the area of permanent deployment (near Varshavskoye highway south and north of Bereza-Kartuzskaya), while one of its motorized rifle regiments was advanced to the line of the river. Mukhavets near the settlement Dams. The headquarters of the mechanized

corps reached the command post provided for by the cover plan in the Tevli area. The 22nd Panzer Division found itself in an incomparably worse situation, having met the outbreak of war in a camp near the Bug itself and found itself under enemy shelling : **% of personnel and families. The withdrawn materiel had up to one ammunition load and one refueling.**

[386] In the very first hours of the war, two deputy commanders of the 22nd TD (regimental commissar A. Illarionov and military engineer 2nd rank E. Chertov) were killed, the chief of staff of the division, Lieutenant Colonel A. Kislitsyn, and the commander of the 44th TD, Major N. . Kvass. By noon, the fairly thinned tank regiments of the division crossed the river. Mukhavets and concentrated in the area northwest of Zhabinka, while the motorized rifle regiment of the division moved away from the border to Radvanichi.

In general, by the evening of June 22, in the direction of Brest, Kobrin, Pruzhany, the enemy had a 3-fold numerical superiority, supplemented by the technical superiority of medium tanks, which accounted for half of the tank fleet of the 47th and 24th tank corps of the Wehrmacht, over the light T-26 14th mechanized corps. Probably, in assessing such a situation, the use of the word "only" becomes quite appropriate. The only reasonable solution would be to move to a mobile defense using the natural lines of the Mukhavets, Yaselda and Shchara rivers (see Fig. 13). Maybe it made sense, taking advantage of the enemy's temporary confusion and slowing down the pace of his advance, to immediately withdraw all the surviving units to the Yaselda River - there would be a dense, impassable forest in the rear and on the flanks of the defenders, an ideal place for tank ambushes, minefields, blockages, to exhaust the advancing enemy. In reality, a completely different decision was made:

"Combat order No. 02. Shtarm-4, Zapруды, 22.6.41 18-30 on the offensive bypassing Brest from the north with the task of destroying the enemy who crossed the river. Zap. Bug ... the 14th mechanized corps (22nd, 30th tank and 205th motorized divisions) from the morning of 23.6.41 strike from the line of Krivlyany, Pelishche, Khmelevo in the general direction to Vysokoye with the task of destroying the enemy to the east by the end of the day R. Zap. Bug ... The 28th Rifle Corps strikes with its right flank (6, 42nd Rifle Divisions and a tank battalion of the 205th Motorized Division) in the general direction of Brest, having the task of occupying Brest by the end of the day. The attack should begin at 05:00 on 23/6/41 after a 15-minute fire attack." [387] Seen from today, it is complete madness; what kind of offensive could be discussed given the existing balance of forces (and taking into account

the real state of these forces)? Sandalov quite self-critically assesses the order given with his participation: ***"The army command tried to implement the decisions taken before the war according to the cover plan, which in no way corresponded to the prevailing situation ... Neither the army commander, nor the army headquarters, nor the corps commanders raised the question before the front headquarters about the inexpediency of conducting a counterattack and did not make a proposal to go over to the defense."*** [378] In fairness, however, one should also take into account the circumstances in which the suicidal decision to go on the counteroffensive was made.

First of all, it should be noted that neither the headquarters of the 4th Army, nor the headquarters of the Western Front, nor the General Staff in Moscow had adequate information about the composition of the grouping and the plans of the enemy. In the above Combat Order No. 02, there is no mention of the enemy at all - which directly contradicts the normatively fixed procedure for drawing up combat orders, and even common sense. Intelligence report No. 1 of the headquarters of the Western Front, compiled by 20.00 on June 22, discovered two tank divisions that did not exist in reality advancing on Belsk, and did not utter a word about the most powerful tank grouping in the Brest direction; the enemy's intentions were defined as follows: ***"To cut off the main communications [of the front] with a concentric strike in the direction of Grodno and in the northeast direction to Volkovysk."*** [388]

Speaking abstractly, there were some logical grounds for such an assumption: an attack on Belsk would allow the Germans to launch an offensive in a relatively open area and later, through a 20-km "throat" between Supraslskaya and Belovezhskaya Pushchas, reach the Bialystok-Volkovysk road; the trouble is that this "theory" did not at all coincide with the decisions of the Wehrmacht command, whose intention was to encircle the troops of the Western Front as a whole, without exchanging for the private task of cutting off the "Bialystok ledge". Slightly breaking the chronology of the presentation, we note that even on the second day of the war, after the failure of the offensive, the command of the 4th Army in Combat Order No. 03 estimated the enemy grouping as ***"a tank division, two or three infantry divisions."*** [389] The

second in a row and the most important reason for the mistake was a misunderstanding, a tragic misunderstanding of the processes that had begun in the troops entrusted to General Korobkov (as well as to any other commander of the Red Army). "I could not understand at this bloody moment ..." ©. Cheerful pre-war marches still sounded in their heads, memories of the triumphal procession along the roads of defeated Poland were still fresh in their memory, and at the headquarters of the 4th Army it still seemed that our people were full of courage, that it was enough just to give an order - and they would go, the team would be swept up, an armored shock battalion, the earth will tremble under the tracks, and the

enemies will rush to their heels under the pressure of steel and fire ... The morning of June 23 came. Formations of the 4th Army went (?) on the offensive. The enemy, to be honest, this "offensive" did not even notice. Two infantry divisions (31st Infantry Division and 34th Infantry Division) of the 12th Army Corps of the Wehrmacht resumed movement, advanced about 20 km, and by the end

laconic: **"The resistance of the Russians is the most insignificant."** The losses of the 31st Infantry Division for June 23 amounted to: 1 killed, 5 wounded, 6 sick. [390]

In the War Journal of the 3rd Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, with great difficulty, you can find a few words in which at least somehow the oncoming battle with the tanks of the 14th Mechanized Corps is mentioned:

"06.20. The tank brigade is still in front of Bulkovo. The combat group "Korvin" reports on strong enemy formations north of Kobrin, including tanks there.

The retreat of enemy units from Kobrin in the northeast direction was noticed ... By order of the division commander, the 1st reconnaissance battalion, the 3rd motorcycle battalion and the 3rd battalion of the 6th tank regiment (these are underwater tanks that crossed the late evening of June 22 through Mukhavets near Bulkova - M.S.) launched an attack on Kobrin. 08.45. As a result of the assault,

the advanced units managed to enter Kobrin. Several tanks have been destroyed, one bridge has been destroyed, and another is intact. 11.40. The 3rd motorcycle battalion is located in Bukhovichi

(n.p. near the highway 5 km northeast of Kobrin. - M.S.) , enemy troops were not found in this village. Numerous trophies have been captured..." [385]

True, in the detailed, broken down by day, summary of prisoners and trophies of the 3rd Panzer Division, signed on August 7, 1941, there are 137 tanks **" captured or destroyed"** on June 23. [391] The compilers of the report did not take care of the convenience of future historians and did not keep separate records of destroyed and captured tanks. It is also known that the 18th Panzer Division reported about 120 Soviet tanks knocked out in the battle near the settlement. Scheni (5 km southwest of Pruzhany). The report on the combat operations of the 14th mechanized corps, the only document discovered to date related to the actions of the 14th MK and its divisions, also does not give a clear picture of the battle that took place:

"In the process of fulfilling the assigned task, the mechanized corps, together with the 28th SC, fought an oncoming battle with tanks and three infantry divisions of the enemy, supported by aviation. Some regiments were bombed up to 6 times within 2–3 hours. Enemy tactics: in front (as in the text) aviation is bombing, light and medium tanks are ahead of the infantry; when our tanks attack, light tanks leave, medium tanks take over the battle. As a result of the battle, the corps suffered significant losses, mainly from aviation, and withdrew: the 30th TD to Gorodniki, Linevo, the 22nd TD to the area of Gutski, Polyatychi, Andronovo (these are the northwestern suburbs of Kobrin, but at 10 am on " Soviet times "there were already Germans in Kobrin. - M.S.) ". [386]

That, in fact, is all that is said in the report on the event, called by some authors "the largest tank battle of the initial period of the war." Here it is also necessary to take into account that this report was prepared by the head of the Armored Directorate of the Central Front, Colonel Kabanov, on August 2 and ends with the following phrase: ***"Compiled on the basis of the scanty documents and eyewitness accounts available."***

As far as the course of the tank battle is unclear, the end result is so obvious. At 9:50 a.m. German time, the 18th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht occupied Pruzhany and, without stopping there, crossed the river. Yaselda on the unexploded bridge. Then, practically without resistance, the tanks of 47 TK passed 30 km along the forest section of the highway (it turned into 50 km in the railway corps) and occupied Ruzhany at 8 o'clock in the evening. The 3rd Panzer Division, advancing in the vanguard of the 24th TK, occupied Bereza Kartuzskaya at 16:00, which meant the final breakthrough of the line of the river. Yaselda along the entire defense front of the 4th Army. In the report on the hostilities of the 14th MK, the final defeat

of the corps is described as follows: ***"By the end of the day on June 23, the 14th MK and 28 SK, which did not have time to put themselves in order, were again subjected to a combined attack by enemy aircraft, tanks and infantry. 28th SC could not withstand the blow and began to withdraw. The retreat turned into a flight. Tank formations, fighting in the environment, suffered heavy losses; only small units by the morning of June 24 reached the Slonim-Ivantsevichi line (settlement 32 km along the highway northeast of Bereza. - M.S.) . The 205th MD took up defense along the river. Shchara, covering the concentration of the re-***

formed (as in the text) ***14 MK and 28 SK. [386]*** Combat report No. 07 of the headquarters of the 4th Army is no less eloquent: ***"By the end of June 23, 1941, enemy aircraft, together with tank units, attacked our units at the turn of the river. Yaselda. The disparate units of the 28th Rifle and 14th Mechanized Corps, which did not have time to put themselves in order, could not withstand this attack, supported by a large number of aircraft, and began to withdraw, which, despite a number of defensive points, turned into an unorganized continuous retreat of mixed units behind R. Yaselda. By the morning of June 24, 1941, the units retreated east of the Slonim line, the river. Shchara*** (that is, in one night they "rolled back" 50-60 km from Yasel

The constant references to air strikes are not accidental and, most likely, objectively reflect the real situation: the troops of the 4th Army "rolled back" that day at such a speed that for a moment they were able to break away from the ground enemy - but not from aviation, run away from

which is impossible in principle. However, the Germans did their best to keep up. In the ZhBD 3rd TD we read: **"23.00.**

The advanced units of the division reached the line of the Shchara River, captured the bridge intact and created a small bridgehead, on which there are units of the motorcycle battalion and the 3rd battalion of the tank regiment. The command of the corps ordered with all energy to pursue the broken parts of the enemy.

June 24. 03.30. The tank brigade was instructed to refuel from the vehicles of the 9th motor transport column that approached at the last moment, and then at 04.00, together with the motorcycle battalion, again become at the forefront of our units. The 2nd division of the 75th artillery regiment should immediately advance to the line of the river. Schara.

Around 05.00, the troops managed to expand the bridgehead in the eastern direction.

06.45. The 3rd motorized rifle brigade crossed the river. Schara across the bridge in the next line-up...

08.15. The command post of the division was moved to the line of the river. Schara (meaning that During the day, the headquarters moved 130 km. — ***M.S.)***. [385]

On the evening of June 23, the headquarters of the 4th Army withdrew to the village of Milovidy (in a large bend of the Shchara River), and then, by the evening of June 24, even further east to Sinyavka (settlement near Varshavskoe highway, 70 km west of Slutsk). There, late in the evening of June 24, Opersvodka No. 01 was compiled, the first in number and actually summing up the fighting of the 4th Army:

"... The remnants of the units of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions of the 28th SC, after a series of defensive battles, by 18 o'clock retreated to the Rusinovichi, Talminovichi area (this is already beyond the eastern side of the bend of the Schara river. - ***M.S.)***, ***where in order. These remnants are not combat-ready... The 14th mechanized corps, actively defending itself, repeatedly launching counterattacks, suffered heavy losses in materiel and personnel, and by 25.6.41 was not in a combat-ready state [129] . The 120th howitzer artillery regiment was hardly used due to the transience of the fighting*** (an interesting wording; what is the cause and what is the consequence? - ***M.S.)*** .. ***From the constant and cruel bombardment, the infantry is demoralized and does not show perseverance in defense. Disorderly departing subunits, and sometimes even units, have to be stopped and turned to the front by the commanders of all formations, although these measures, despite the use of weapons, did not give the desired effect ...*** "[393] L. Lopukhovsky describes an absolutely outstanding

case of "use of weapons" study of the history of the 120th gap. "Some general blocked the road with his ZIS vehicle and ordered the gunners to take

firing positions right by the road and immediately open fire (according to Lopukhovsky, it was Major General Khabarov, the same one whom Pavlov ordered "to shoot any number of people, but stop the retreat of the 4th Army." - M.S.) ... **To to stop the panicked groups of servicemen who fled, the guns fired several shots. By order of the general, the gunners placed a type "B" repair flyer across the highway to delay the vehicles, and set up a barrier. Commanders with weapons in their hands stopped the fleeing. Immediately there was a traffic jam on the road. Enemy planes flew in, started bombing, and the barrier was simply crushed ... "** [379]
At the last

frontier The

breakthrough of German tank units to the Shchara River significantly changed the situation on the scale of the entire Western Front. And the point here is not only in stunning arithmetic - in two days half the distance from Brest to Minsk was covered. An enemy breakthrough into the Slonim, Baranovichi area meant the enemy's mechanized units entered the operational space, into a relatively open and passable (in contrast to what they had to overcome on the edge of Polesie) terrain. Secondly, with the loss of Slonim, the main transport highway (Bialystok, Volkovysk, Baranovichi highways) was cut, through which it was possible to divert the formations of the 3rd and 10th Armies to the east. Strictly speaking, this

"withdrawal" in the form of a spontaneous disorderly retreat was already in full swing. On June 24, the head of the political propaganda department of the 17th mechanized corps reported to the front

headquarters: **"Vehicles with military personnel, families, as well as on foot, both in groups and alone, stretch through Baranovichi to the east in a continuous stream. Moreover, the look of the majority expressing a panic mood. The measures taken - to organize the assembled command staff - did not give a positive result. Most of them fled during the night. At the same time, many commanding officers are without weapons ... The railway department and the commandant's office fled, military registration and enlistment offices and other institutions leave the city. The population is fleeing the city in droves. The arriving**

commanders are looking for headquarters, most of which are not known ... " [404] There was no longer any hope that the "non-combat-worthy remnants" of the defeated units and divisions would be able to counterattack and push the enemy back, and the command of the Western Front hastily put reserves into action. The first of these - as in many similar situations, on this and other fronts - was aviation. Hopes for it were based both on pre-war, extremely exagger-

ideas about a devastating strike from the sky, and on the first reports of their own troops, in which enemy aircraft acted as an all-destroying force. ***“In order to avoid the rapid pace of the enemy’s offensive, first***

of all, on the 23rd, I deployed all available bomber aircraft exclusively for bombing the advancing enemy in the Kobrin area.” This is a line from the protocol of the interrogation of the front commander Pavlov. All "available aviation" on the southern flank of the Western Front consisted by that time of the 13th bomber air division. The division with the "unlucky number" even in the pre-war period became one of the best in combat training in the Soviet Air Force; it was also numerically very large (five air regiments) formation, and the commander of the 13 BAD was completely outstanding - for the Hero of the Soviet Union, Major General F.P. Polynin, the war that began on June 22, 1941 was already the third in a row (in addition to participating in the Soviet-Finnish war, the general also had the experience of an air war in China, in which he participated, with interruptions, already from 1933). Judging by Operational Report No. 3 of the headquarters of the 13th BAD, on June 24, the pilots of the division carried out 146 sorties and brought down more than a thousand bombs on the enemy’s mechanized columns in the area of Kobrin, Bereza, Pruzhany, Ruzhany (591 FAB-100, 96 FAB-50, 326 AO-25, 171 AO-15). [394] Such

a strike was noticed by the enemy, although, of course, it did not disappear without a trace, as happened after the first bombing strikes on the other side of the front. Even the headquarters of the 2nd TGr was bombed (which Guderian writes about in his memoirs). In the ZhBD of the 3rd TD of the Wehrmacht we read: ***“12.00. The divisions of the marching column were raided by enemy Martin bombers*** (this is how the Germans identified the 2-engine bomber SB. - *M.S.*). ***The troops in the area where the division headquarters were located did not suffer any losses. 13.00. Units of the 1st division of the 11th anti-aircraft artillery***

the regiment was relocated to the sector of the river. A ball to protect the bridge...

14.25. Due to raids by enemy fighters (there were no fighters at all, most likely, this is how the Germans described the appearance of the new Su-2 single-engine bomber. - *M.S.*) ***and bombers, the speed of the division’s advance noticeably decreased; during these raids, however, the division suffered only minor losses.*** [385] Even for such a rather modest result, a huge price had to be paid - 52 aircraft

were lost (shot down or made an emergency landing)! The reason for the high losses, alas, is very simple: our own fighter aircraft melted away during the panic "relocation" from

border airfields, and the Germans covered the offensive of the 2nd Tank Group with fighters of the best and largest "ace squadron" (JG-51) under the command of the famous Molders. Nevertheless, even with such a level of losses (every third was shot down during the day!) Polynin's division continued to fight and on June 25 completed 98 more sorties in the same area and dropped about five hundred bombs. [395] Be that as it

may, the aviation of that era was only capable of slowing down the enemy's offensive, inflicting more or less significant losses on him. Only ground troops could stop and defeat the "tank ram". And in this aspect, military luck at least once, but turned out to be on the side of the Red Army: exactly where the advanced units of the 2nd Wehrmacht TGr went, three rifle divisions (155th, 121st, 143rd) of the 47th rifle corps. Another division (the 55th rifle division), on the orders of Pavlov, was transferred by road from Slutsk to the line of the river. Shchara. To some extent, "luck" can also be considered the fact that the German command chased "two birds with one stone at once", i.e. one tank corps (47th) tried to continue the offensive through Baranovich, Stolbtsy to Minsk, and the other (24th) was sent along the Warsaw highway to Slutsk and further to Bobruisk. From that moment on, fighting in the bend of the river. Shchara can be conditionally divided into two operations - in the eastern (Slutsk) and northern directions.

The few surviving documents allow, in the most general terms, to restore the picture of the battles in the Slutsk direction. The Shchara River crosses the Warsaw Highway at two points. The western section (near Byten, Domanovo) was forced by the advance detachment of the 3rd German Panzer Division on the night of June 24th. The first time it was possible to stop the non-stop advance of the enemy at the turn of Milovidy; there, units of the 205th motorized and the remnants of the tank divisions of the 14th MK entered the battle. By noon, the first units of the 55th Infantry Division had joined them, and for the first time since the beginning of the war, the following entry appeared in the ZhBD 24 TK of the Wehrmacht: ***"The enemy is putting up stubborn resistance in order to hold the 2nd sector of Shchara. The enemy has strong artillery and tanks. It seems that there are no longer soldiers caught unawares in a peacetime garrison, but soldiers defending good, skillfully built defensive positions ... 3 TD intends to launch an offensive in the evening with the support of dive bombers, but the application for them was late and due to the advancing darkness, the attack of the "pieces" can no longer be realized. Despite this, the division still manages to take the bridge over the 2nd section of the river. Shchara" .*** [

The 14th MK Combat Report describes this somewhat differently, with the obligatory presence of the ubiquitous German aircraft: **"June 24. The 205th MD,**

suffering heavy losses, repels enemy attacks, and at 13.00 its remnants are replaced by the newly arrived 55th Infantry Division. At 14.00 the enemy attacks, having previously heavily bombed the location of the division. The division, despite the introduction of the remnants of tanks (25 units), could not stand it, retreated back ... " [386] Strange as it may seem, the handwritten journal

of military operations of the 55th division was also preserved. The entries in it are brief, which, however, only reinforces the assumption that the JBD was compiled in the hot pursuit of events. June 24 is described as follows:

"June 24. 13.00. The 111th rifle regiment (it arrived earlier than the others. - *M.S.*) **entered into battle with the enemy motorized mechanized corps at the turn of 5 km Milovidy. After breaking through the enemy's motorized parts, he retreated to the Rogachi area** (a settlement inside the Shchara bend, 10 km southeast of Milovidy) . **By 16.00 on June 24, 228 joint ventures, 141 ap, 79 rb, having prepared defenses on the eastern bank of the river. Myshanka** (the right tributary of the Shchara River, crosses the highway 9 km east of Milovidy) , **at the turn of the highway and the forest north of the highway, from 16.00 to 2.00 on June 25 stubbornly held the given line, repelling three enemy attacks ... "** [396]

Judging by the Combat Report No. 07 headquarters of the 4th Army, 55th Infantry Division line of the river. Myshanka did not hold back and already on the evening of June 24, she crossed to the eastern bank of the Shchara: **"At 14.00 on 24.6.41, the enemy, after artillery and aviation preparation, went on the offensive against the 55th Rifle Division, having a tank echelon ahead (20-30 units). Parts of the division could not stand it and, despite the introduction of the second echelons of the regiments into battle and the entire presence of tanks of the 14th mechanized corps (up to 25 vehicles), they began to withdraw and by 18 o'clock they moved beyond the river. Schara.** [392]

In any case, there was a stubborn battle in the bend of the Shchara, and this confirmed by entries in the ZhBD of the 3rd Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht:

"19.00 ... After the advanced units of the Linnarts group approached the second crossing over the river. Schara, they came under fire from the enemy. Separate enemy guns keep under fire the road along which our troops are advancing, and up to one regiment of enemy infantry has been seen on the eastern bank of the river. These are probably rearguard units; their resilience cannot be underestimated...

20.15. The start of the attack has been postponed to 21.15. Under the cover of tank fire, the 1st company of the motorcycle battalion and the 1st company of the 394th motorized infantry regiment created a bridgehead. A fierce firefight ensues, resulting in casualties on both sides. Eventually crossed over

the units still had to return to the western side of the Shchara River (it is not often possible to find this in the descriptions of the battles of the first days of the war. - **M.S.). June**

25th. 07 - 00. The command ordered to stop the offensive, pull up the lagging units, refuel and replenish ammunition ... the reconnaissance unit of the motorcycle battalion ~~Official~~ **at 08.00 left for the Shchara line with the task of clarifying the situation east of the river, returned and reported that the enemy had left their positions and was retreating to east..." [385]** On June 25, the German 3rd TD was rapidly advancing along the highway to Slutsk, and by the evening it was already

in the area of the settlement. Semezhevo, 37 km west of Slutsk. However, the records in the division's railway records still record frequent skirmishes with the defending units of the Red Army (here it is worth taking into account that in the section from the Shchara River to Slonim, the channels of five rivers, tributaries of the Pripyat (Nach, Lan, Balvanka, Moroch, Lokneya) cross the road) and two unnamed streams). There were even battles with separate groups of tanks, most likely, these were scattered units of the 14th mechanized corps. Probably on this day, June 25, the commander of the 55th Infantry Division, Colonel D.I., went missing (or was killed). Ivanyuk.

The last attempt to delay the offensive of the 3rd Panzer Division was made on the morning of June 26 in the western suburbs of Slutsk. In the Report on the hostilities of the 14th MK we read: **"On June 26, the remnants of the motorized rifle regiments of the 22nd and 30th TD were tasked to defend the city of Slutsk along the eastern bank of the river to the last bullet and man. Chance" .**

Judging by the ZhBD of the 3rd TD of the Wehrmacht, there were fighters and

units that carried out this order: **"08.50. West of Slutsk, up to 20 enemy tanks were spotted, artillery pieces that are in firing positions ...**

09.00. Units of the "Linnarz" group began the assault on Slutsk, which was taken by 10.30. Enemy snipers are operating everywhere, attacking, among other things, single unarmored vehicles ...

13.00. The battle group "Linnarz" together with the 1st battalion of the 6th TP managed to break through Slutsk. The task of clearing the city from the remaining enemy forces is taken over by the 1st battalion of the 394th infantry regiment

In general, the defense of Slutsk is described in the Military Operations Journal of the Western Front in the following words: **"Units of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions, the 14th MK and the second echelon of the 113th rifle division, which were entrusted with the defense of the Slutsk UR, did not show resistance to the enemy in the UR and, leaving Slutsk, retreated to Bobruisk. [406]**

After breaking through the city and the fortifications of the Slutsk UR abandoned without a fight, the Model division (3rd TD) rushed to Bobruisk at an increasing pace of the march. Before her rolled a wave of disorderly retreating armed crowd. The head of the reconnaissance department of the 97th Bomber Aviation Regiment, Captain Lazutenko, reports on June 27:

“12.30 personally flew to reconnaissance of Slutsk along the highway Bobruisk, Slutsk from a height of 5 meters. Our troops are moving towards Slutsk, motorized infantry, armored vehicles and artillery, traffic from Slutsk to Bobruisk, vehicles loaded with things and pedestrians, evacuation, ambulances. There is no anti-aircraft fire over Slutsk. Troops welcome the flying aircraft. There is no one in Bobruisk. The warehouses have been blown up. Anti-aircraft artillery has withdrawn from firing positions and is moving east. There are no fighters to cover the Bobruisk airfield. Communication with B

Assistant to the head of the Political Propaganda Department of the Polar Front, senior battalion commissar Gorbunov [130] observed this drap-march from a distance of less than 5 meters, and his report describes vivid pictures of the terrible defeat : ***the***

units hurriedly retreated, going over to the defense, which turned out to be temporary, because when the advanced units of the enemy approached, our defending units hurriedly retreated. The withdrawal proceeded in panic, especially the convoys from the Starye Dorogi region (settlement 50 km east of Slutsk. - M.S.) to Bobruisk. The cars went at high speeds in a row by two, overtaking each other, thereby creating and

increasing panic ...

In the units there are many cases of shelling on the roads suspected of espionage, without substantiated data. This makes it possible for provocateurs and saboteurs to use their vile activities to disable command personnel. On June 27, when a convoy of vehicles was moving, one of the unknown commanders stopped the cars with the command staff of the 4th Army, who were asked to get off the cars with their hands up, they tried to disarm and shoot, but this did not happen only thanks to the intervention of one commander who knew some of the detainees. On the same day, 6 employees of the 3rd department (“special department”) were shot by the junior commander of the 141st rifle regiment ... ” [397]

On the northern (Slonim, Baranovichi) direction, the Germans had to stumble upon stubborn resistance and get involved in heavy, multi-day battles. The euphoria after the dizzying march from the border to Slonim passed quickly. Combat log 47 TK with unconcealed

fixes with alarm: ***"The enemy manages to repeatedly break through on the highway southwest of Slonim. Around 15.30 one of these enemy attacks, carried out with the support of numerous tanks, the strength and tenacity of which is constantly increasing, leads to a breakthrough, accompanied by the destruction of many vehicles with fuel that were moving along the highway to replenish the fuel supplies of the tank regiments. [398]*** Judging by Guderian's memoirs, on that day, during a trip from Pruzhany to Slonim and back, he twice ran into Soviet infantry, and in Slonim, at the command post of the 17th Panzer Division, he found himself under fire from the guns of two tanks that broke into the city. By the evening of June 24,

the situation became critical. The radio communication between the headquarters of the 47th TC with the 18th Panzer Division was interrupted, and an entry appeared in the corps' railway data: ***"We have to assume that the Russians managed to destroy the headquarters of the 18th TD."*** Only by the morning of June 25, the situation cleared up: ***"On the eve of 21.00, powerful enemy attacks took place on the positions of the 17th and especially the 18th Panzer Divisions, including the command post of the 18th TD. However, the enemy was not able to expand his breakthrough in the afternoon,***

the attacks were repulsed everywhere with heavy losses. Our losses are also great." [398] Losses could probably have been even greater if the actions of the 155th, 121st and 143rd rifle divisions were coordinated by a single command. Unfortunately, the headquarters of the 47th rifle corps (together with the communications battalion and the 462nd corps artillery regiment) was located east of the Berezina by the beginning of the war, and only on the night of June 24-25 did the corps commander, Major General Povetkin, arrive in Minsk, where at the headquarters front received an order ***"to contact the 4th Army in the Sinyavka area and subj***

General Povetkin did not succeed in finding his subordinates, and in the meantime, a fierce battle was blazing near the Slonim-Baranovichi road. Extremely annoyed by the unforeseen delay in the offensive, the command of the 2nd TGr of the Wehrmacht hastily transferred reserves to the Shchara River - since the two main highways were captured by the Germans. On the evening of June 25, the 29th motorized division arrived in the Slonim area, which made it possible to release the 17th TD and send it to help the 18th TD, which was unsuccessfully attacking Baranovichi. Then part of the forces of the 4th Panzer Division were turned from the Warsaw Highway to the north towards Baranovichi; the command post of the 2nd TGr was moved to the settlement. Tartaki (near the highway, 20 km southwest

of Baranovichi). At the cost of such efforts (parts of three tank divisions were concentrated at one point!) The Germans managed to break through the defenses of the Soviet rifle divisions in the afternoon of June 26, and on the evening of June 26

the German 17th TD, advancing 60 km, occupied Stolbtsy. The figures of casualties eloquently testify to the fierceness of the fighting. During the first ten days of the war, the 18th Panzer lost (killed, wounded and missing) 1346 people - a staggering figure against the background of the losses of other formations of the Wehrmacht, the 29th motorized division lost 1026 people, the 17th Panzer - 653. [400] The list of losses included the commander of the 17th TD, General von Arnim, who was wounded in the battles for Stolbtsy.

The only reserve that the command of the Western Front could use at that moment was the 17th mechanized corps. The state of this formation turned out to be outstanding - 10 thousand personnel (most likely, these were reservists who arrived at the "training camps") were not even armed with small arms; in three divisions of the "mechanized corps" there were only 56 light tanks (9 BT-7 and 47 T-26) and 38 armored vehicles. If you believe the report of the head of the political propaganda department of the 27th TD, the howitzer regiment of the division had no shells at all (and this despite the fact that 720 thousand pieces of 122-mm rounds alone were accumulated in the district). [401] Finally, the motorized rifle division of the corps (209th MD), stationed north of the Neman, in the area of Ilye, Traba, Golshany, was withdrawn from the corps from the first days of the war (nominally it was subordinated to the command of the 3rd Army, but to find some then traces of her participation in the hostilities west or north of the Neman, near Grodno, Lida,

Traba, did not succeed). The shortest and most dramatic assessment of the state of the 17th mechanized corps is found in a telegram received at 14-13 on June 24 at the General Staff: ***"Deputy commander of the 17th MK Colonel Kozhokhin Nikolai Viktorovich committed suicide on June 23 by firing a revolver shot in the heart. The investigation***

is underway." [402] Of course, such a formation cannot be called a "mechanized corps"; it is also true that in aggregate, under the command of Major General Petrov, there were troops, the number of which corresponded to a rifle division, reinforced by a battalion of tanks and a powerful artillery group [131]. You can read about how this was used in the August Report on the combat operations of the mechanized

corps: ***"... Due to the fact that the rifle divisions operating in the Slonim area began to retreat to Baranovich, the corps commander gave the order: turn to Baranovich. By 16.00 on June 25, the divisions began to approach Baranovich and took up defenses from the south and south-west. The 71st tank regiment (36th TD) had the task of taking up the defense of the Baranovich airfield, destroying the enemy landing force at the air***

was a reconnaissance battalion of the 3rd German Panzer Division. — ***M.S.) and withdraw the aircraft materiel remaining there. During***

26.6 hours, the enemy conducted intensified aerial reconnaissance of defense areas and bombardment of these areas from the air. On the morning of June 26, Major General Khabarov, Assistant Commander of the Polar Front for Military Educational Institutions, took command of the Baranovichi Group of Divisions. By the end of June 26, Major General Khabarov decided to withdraw the 155th Rifle Division, the 121st Rifle Division, and the 143rd Rifle Division to the line of the river. Usha, and the 27th and 36th TD - to the Mir metro area (18 km west of Stolbtsy) . The withdrawal of divisions began late at night on 27.6. Already during the retreat to Stolovichi (10 km from Baranovichi), movement was established in the rear of the retreating units of enemy tanks and motorcyclists. With the onset of dawn, enemy aircraft appeared, which, in cooperation with ground units, scattered the departing units in different directions, partially destroying them ... " [403]

Be that as it may, but at the turn of Slonim, Baranovichi, the offensive of the 2nd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht was delayed for three days (June 24, 25, 26), and the history of these battles is still waiting for its attentive and impartial researcher.

Chapter 3.4 Grodno

In the previous two chapters, we examined the course of hostilities on the flanks of the German Army Group Center. Both in the direction of Alytus, Vilnius, and in the strip of Brest, Baranovichi, the Wehrmacht had such a significant numerical superiority over the first echelon of the Red Army troops that their defeat was almost inevitable. The greater or lesser stamina of the troops, the general skill of the commanders of the 11th and 4th Armies could only change the price that had to be paid for the success of the enemy, and the pace of his offensive. Which, however, is quite important, because the outcome of the next stage of the battle depended on these prices and pace. This chapter will focus on the fighting in the center of the operational formation of the GA "Center" (for the Red Army it was the right flank of the Western Front), where the Soviet mechanized formations seemed to be simply "doomed to success."

The

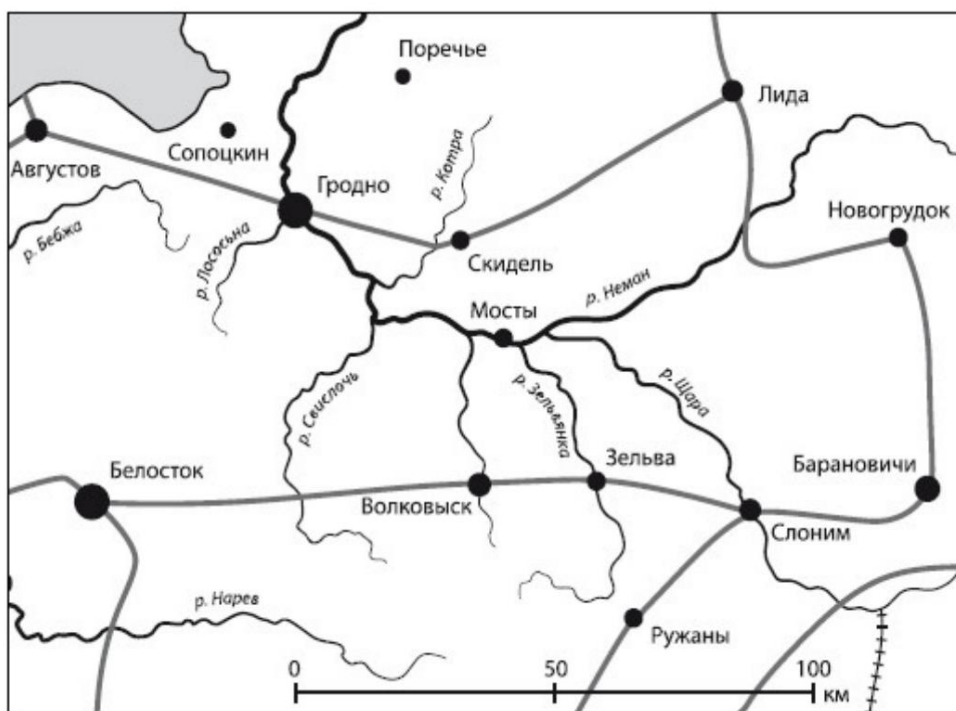
plot In all known variants of the plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, defense was assumed on the northern contour of the "Bialystok salient"; even the intention to launch a short blow in a north-western direction with the task of "cutting off the Suwalki ledge" was ultimately abandoned. The troops of the 3rd and 10th Armies of the Western OVO were preparing for defense, and the mechanized corps concentrated in the Bialystok, Brest strip were to advance in a southwestern direction, towards Warsaw and Demblin. The

terrain was quite favorable for the tasks of defense (see incl., Fig. 11). On the "point of the Bialystok ledge" is the Narew River in its lower, wide course. At the northern bypass of the "Bialystok ledge", almost exactly repeating the line of the border, the Biebrzha River flows with swampy (in some areas - up to ten kilometers) banks. In the depths of the proposed defense line is the full-flowing Neman. On the right (northern) flank is the Augustow Canal, connecting Biebrzha with the Neman; the "line of demarcation between the state interests of the USSR and Germany" drawn in September 1939 divided the canal into three sections: the Germans had the center in the "Suwalk ledge", the northern and southern ends of the canal were on Soviet territory. Ultimately, the Germans were left with a relatively open "corridor" (Lipsk, Sopotskin) no more than 20 km wide for the offensive on Grodno.

It was planned to strengthen the natural barriers with two powerful fortified areas, Osovetsky and Grodno, which were supposed to include, respectively, 594 and 606 bunkers - this is an absolute record among all fortified areas on the new border. Yes, they did not manage to bring the grandiose program to completion, and Soviet historians, without sinning at all against the truth, each time reminded that in the Grodno UR by the beginning of the war some miserable 16% of bunkers had been built. Which in absolute terms means 98 concrete boxes indestructible for divisional artillery fire (half of the "Mannerheim Line"), and 42 of them have already had special equipment and weapons installed. The command of

the Wehrmacht, resolutely massaging forces (two tank and two infantry corps) in the Vilnius direction, inevitably weakened the center and southern flank of its 9th Army. Three infantry divisions were stretched into a thread along the 130-km northern contour of the "Bialystok ledge", and there is no need to talk about a successful offensive at such an operational density (more than 40 km per division). In the Grodno direction, in the defense zone of the Soviet 3rd Army, five infantry divisions of the 8th and 20th army (infantry) corps of the Wehrmacht were advancing; in the first echelon of the 3rd Army there were three rifle divisions (56th, 85th and 27th), which, taking into account the terrain properties mentioned above and the presence of a fortified area, theoretically made it possible to provide a stable defense.

Of course, the German command had a different opinion on this matter. Before the 8th army corps (from north to south: 161st, 28th, 8th infantry divisions) the task was set, advancing in an easterly direction, to force the river. Neman at Grodno and to the north and move up to the Lida, Voronovo highway; thus, at the first stage of the operation, the infantry had to advance to a depth of 100 km. Two infantry divisions (162nd and 256th) of the 20th Army Corps were supposed to move southeast along the left bank of the Neman to force the Lososna and Svisloch rivers; offensive depth of about 75 km. (Fig. 28.)



Rice. 28. The area of military operations

of the 3rd army Taking into account the tasks of the upcoming breakthrough of the fortified area, an unusually powerful artillery group was included in the 8th and 20th army corps of the Wehrmacht: along with 11 divisions armed with 105-mm cannons and 150-mm howitzers (in the Red Army it would be called "corps artillery"), there were 5 divisions of heavy 210-mm howitzers and 4 artillery divisions of "special power" (240-mm and 305-mm guns). The list is impressive, but the troops of the Red Army had something to fight back. As part of the 3rd Army - two (152nd and 444th) corps artillery regiments (both of which were already in the border zone). This is at least 6 divisions. And in the neighboring 10th Army there are seven such regiments (130, 156, 262, 315, 311, 124, 375). Yes, there were no high-powered artillery (howitzers of 203 mm caliber and above) in the 3rd and 10th Armies, because there was no adequate target for such artillery systems - the Germans did not bring with them mobile pillboxes on wheels ...

The order to raise units on combat alert with the opening of the "red packets" (i.e., the actual introduction of the cover plan) was given by the commander of the Western Front, Pavlov, before the start of hostilities and - which, in the specific conditions of the Stalinist empire, is even more significant - without the appropriate command from Moscow. Reports of this are abundantly scattered throughout the memoirs, but now they can be confirmed by quite authentic documents compiled in the summer of 1941. The first of them is the Journal of Combat Operations of the Western Front. TO

The journal is accompanied by a short report (certificate), signed on August 23 by the chief of staff of the 10th Army, Major General Lyapin and Lieutenant Colonel Markushevich. The events of the fatal night from June 21 to 22 are described there as follows:

“Major General Golubev (commander of the 10th Army) was summoned to the Army headquarters from the apartment of Colonel Lubotsky at about 24.00 21.6 and received an order from Pavlov to be at the HF apparatus, to wait for a particularly important order; what order this was, Golubev did not know. From 24.00 to 1.30 22.6 employees of the headquarters warned the commanders of corps and divisions that they, in turn, were at the vehicles and awaited orders. Between 02:00 and 02:30 Pavlov gave a short command to withdraw the troops via a "red packet" over the HF telephone, and at the same time warned them that a detailed code was being transmitted. Without waiting for a cipher telegram, from 2.30 to 4.00 the Army headquarters gave orders to all commanders of corps and divisions, with the exception of the 113th division, where a delegate was sent ... Contact with the front headquarters 22.6. was satisfactory not only on the radio, but also on the Morse telegraph

It is also worth noting here that the command of the 10th Army could not have any self-interest to describe the chronology of events in this way; rather, on the contrary, it would be “more convenient” for them to present the case in such a way that no one warned them about anything, and even more than that, they were intimidated by the demand “not

to succumb to provocations ...”. The second document is a report by the commander of the 7th Panzer Division (6th Mechanized Corps, 10th Army), Major General Borzilov. We will repeatedly refer to this unique document, for now we will quote only one fragment: ***“On June 22, 1941, at 2.00, a password was received through a communications delegate about a combat alert with the opening of the “red package”. After 10 minutes, a combat alert was announced to units of the division, and at 4.30, units of the division concentrated at the assembly point*** (that is, they left the place of permanent

deployment. - ***M.S.) on combat alert " [132]. [408]*** The third document is the record of the interrogation in German captivity of the commander of the 4th Panzer Division (6th mechanized corps, 10th Army), Major General Potaturchev dated August 30, 1941. Having no way to come to an agreement with the generals mentioned above, Potaturchev describes events are almost the same: ***“On June 22 at 24.00 he was summoned to the commander of the 6th MK, Major General Khatskilevich. At about 2 am [133] , according to the words of the corps commander, who returned from the commander of the 10th Army, Major General Golubev, [he learned] that there was a war between Germany and Russia. After 2 hours of waiting, he received the first order - to raise units on alert and***

Be that as it may, but the determination shown by Pavlov (alas, too late) did not affect the course of the outbreak of hostilities at all. The first reports of the headquarters of the 9th Army of the Wehrmacht reproduce almost verbatim everything that we have already read in documents from other sectors of the Eastern Front.

Operational summary of the 9th Army, June 22, 6 a.m. 45 minutes: ***"The border crossing was carried out according to the offensive plan. Offensive along the entire front with free advance ... Throughout the Army's sector of action - only weak resistance from the enemy. So far, scattered actions of enemy light artillery have been noted, and in the area of the 8th Army Corps - a battery of enemy heavy artillery. [410]*** Combat log of the 20th Army Corps: ***"The divisions of the corps manage to quickly cross the border. The offensive is actively moving forward ... By 13.00, the 481st infantry regiment managed to reach Novy Dvor (settlement on the road Dombrova, Grodno, 20 km from the border. - M.S.) ... The 476th infantry regiment reached Lipsk by noon (n. .p. at the confluence of the rivers Biebrzha and Sidra. - M.S.). Bridges [across the river. Biebrza. — M.S.] are intact..." [411]***

The history of the Grodno fortified area was no different from those described many times above: most of the pillboxes were abandoned without a fight, as a result of which, already at 5.15, the Wehrmacht's 8th infantry division advancing on Grodno reported a breakthrough of the border fortifications. So, in a couple of hours, the results of a multi-month construction "hands on call" were summed up. But at the same time, as well as in other sectors of the front, individual garrisons of bunkers fought for several days and died, buried under the rubble of walls destroyed by heavy

artillery fire. Probably the only thing the Germans failed that morning was the planned operation of one of the units of the notorious Brandenburg Regiment. In the Combat Action Log of 20 AK we read: ***"June 22, 02.30. The operation of the 800th Special Purpose Regiment under the 256th Infantry Division, which was planned to be carried out before the time "H", failed. The units involved in the operation were withdrawn so as not to disturb the peace on the border and not to attract the attention of the enemy.***

[411] So the wires on the left flank of the 3rd Army remained intact. Everything else developed according to the sad "standard" for the Red Army.

The greatest successes were achieved by formations of 8 AK, advancing north of Grodno (161st and 28th infantry divisions). They successfully advanced to the Neman, crossed it in several places, and by the end of the day on June 22, the advanced units of the 161st Infantry Division were advancing towards Porechye (a settlement 23 km east of the Neman). Operational summary 8 AK

states: ***“There is no organized defense in the forest near Porechye. There is only the resistance of individual groups of the enemy. [412]*** The Germans were not mistaken - the 56th Rifle Division opposing them quickly "scattered". In the protocol of interrogation of Pavlov (dated July 7) we read: ***“In the afternoon [June 22] Kuznetsov [Lieutenant General V.I. Kuznetsov, commander of the 3rd Army] with a tremor in his voice, said that, in his opinion, there was a number left from the 56th rifle division ... the situation there, in his opinion, is catastrophic, since scattered units in the Jose area (n.p. near the Neman, 16 km north of Grodno. - M.S.) are hardly holding back the onslaught of the enemy, and the rifle regiment, located between Jose and Druskininkai, was crushed by a blow from the rear of very large mechanized***

units ... "No" mechanized units ", no large ones, no small ones, there were none at all; formations of the 3rd Tank Group passed much to the north, in the Alytus strip, Merkin, and the only 184th division of "assault guns" attached to the 8th Army Corps consisted of only 18 self-propelled guns and was brought into battle to the south, in the Grodno direction. In all other respects, General Kuznetsov was right - the division collapsed completely (in the Combat Report No. 3 of the headquarters of the 3rd Army dated June 12–30 on June 24, it is reported that “as a result of the fighting, the 56th Rifle Division has two small scattered detachments numbering up to ***700–800***

people »); the fact that in the 56th Rifle Division there were conscripts from the “liberated regions” of eastern Poland, who, after the very first shots, threw down their weapons and went home, also played a role. The main events unfolded in the center of the German offensive zone, in the direction of Sopotskin, Grodno. Overcoming the resistance of units of the 85th Infantry Division and several bunkers of the Grodno UR, the advanced units of the 8th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht by noon in a heavy battle advanced to the highway Augustov, Grodno. In this situation, the commander of the 3rd Army decided to immediately put into action his main reserve - the tank divisions of the 11th mechanized corps. This decision may have been facilitated by panic reports from General Kuznetsov's subordinates about heavy German tanks allegedly appearing on the battlefield. At least, this is how Pavlov describes this episode in his testimony: ***“I asked Kuznetsov - what is he doing with the 85th Infantry Division? He replied that the 85th division, having deployed on the line west of Grodno, under pressure from heavy enemy tanks, began to retreat to the south, southeast, but that he, Kuznetsov, was throwing Steklov’s tank division into a counterattack (obvious reservation, 29th Panzer the division was commanded by Colonel Studnev. - M.S.) and will thereby try to restore the position of***

From the 11th mechanized corps (as well as from most other tank formations, defeated in the summer of 1941), there were practically no primary documents left. The archive funds of the corps and the three divisions that make up it (29th TD, 33rd TD, 204th MD) exist, but this is a complete "empty" - accounting books for the command staff, statements of payment of Komsomol contributions, and all this ends at 22nd of June; there are no operational documents (orders, combat reports, reconnaissance and operational reports) at all. The entire "source base" available at the moment comes down, in fact, to two documents: a brief report by the political officer of the 11th MK, regimental commissar Andreev, dated July 15 (published back in 1989) and a detailed report on the combat operations of the corps, compiled by its commander, General Major Mostovenko in early August (this document was declassified in February 2005). In the archives of the GABTU, there are also numerous records of the availability of materiel in the mechanized corps of the Western OVO,

including in 11 MK. [413] The main type of military equipment - tanks - the mechanized corps was equipped with one third of the staffing; in absolute terms, this meant about 380 tanks, mainly light T-26s. There were very few "new types" tanks: 3 KV and 28 T-34s; True, there are documents in which the number of heavy KVs in the 11th mechanized corps is indicated as significantly larger (20 units), but this may be due to the transfer of heavy tanks from the 5th Panzer Division of the Baltic OVO that was started, but not completed (as mentioned in the relevant chapter earlier). It should also be taken into account that, as stated in the report of the corps commander, **"on the day of the speech on 06/22/41, part of the vehicles (10-15%) were out of order and were not taken on a campaign."** [414] There were an unusually large number of BA-10 armored vehicles armed with a 45-mm cannon (by the standards of the mechanized corps at the initial stage of formation) - 59 (according to another

statement, it was 90 at all) units. The most combat-ready formation of the 11th MK was the 29th Panzer Division; it was formed on the basis of the "old" personnel 25th tank brigade born in 1935, however, this brigade had no real combat experience (if you do not take into account the "liberation campaign" in Poland). As of mid-April 1941, the 29th TD was armed with 173 T-26 tanks (including 13 flamethrower ones), later most of the "new types" tanks received by the corps were transferred to this division. In general, the composition of the tank fleet of the 29th TD is quite consistent with a typical German tank division from the 3rd TGr - the same 150-170 light tanks and three dozen vehicles armed with a 76-mm cannon. It's in

In general, if you "twist the sharpness", then it becomes noticeable that the weight of a single salvo of tank guns of the German division is three times less (the Germans have 20 mm and 37 mm barrels), and the T-34 armor is not entirely correct to compare with the "blotch" on forehead of the German Pz-IV.

Divisions of the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht reached Minsk in five days; the offensive route of the 29th Soviet tank division broke off at the Konyukha cape, 12 km northwest of Grodno. Soviet historians tried to ignore this contradiction altogether; modern Russian traditional historians have already found hundreds of two "objective reasons", ranging from the incomplete staffing of the division with personnel and artillery to the poor design of the lubrication unit of the left rear support roller. Much of this is true; in particular, ***"the issue of the security of tractors was especially acute, which did not make it possible to raise even the existing guns and evacuate the wrecked tanks . "*** [414] It is also true that the 152nd Corps Howitzer Artillery Regiment was already located directly in the combat area of the 29th TD, which in its capabilities significantly exceeded the artillery of even a fully equipped tank

divisions.

However, all these details should not be turned into a "smoke screen" that closes the main thing from us. And the main thing is that the German and Soviet tankers had qualitatively different opponents. The German 8th Infantry Division met the counterattack of the 29th TD on the march, and the oncoming battle with tanks is the worst thing that can happen to the infantry, which in this case has neither shelters, nor prepared firing positions for anti-tank guns, nor time to create all this. And yet - a heart-rending cry of "Tanks! Surround!" so it didn't come out. There were clear commands that were given by the commanders and carried out by subordinates. Here I propose to interrupt for a moment our strictly documentary narrative and turn to a source that

is obviously biased and inaccurate. In 1942, a book by a certain Horst Slesin, *Soldiers Against Death and the Devil*, was published in Germany. Our struggle in the USSR. Diary of a soldier. The author was a full-time Wehrmacht propagandist (which clearly affected the content and intonation of the text), and his book was intended primarily for the "military-patriotic education of youth." However, let's take a look at how the battle at Cape Konyukha looked from a close distance:

"Preparations for defense are completed in a few seconds. Excessive haste and excited orders would destroy the mental attitude, which is a necessary and best weapon in battle. The officer of the anti-tank unit, as soon as

the first shells were fired, he calmly takes out a cigarette and asks his soldiers for fire; this has a greater effect on them than simple orders ... Shaking and rattling, our "assault guns" drive up. Although there are not many of them, only one battery (that is, only 6 self-propelled guns. - M.S.), they are the heaviest weapon in the battle against tanks. "Stugs" drive up to the road on the right and left. Now we must wait...

We hear the rumble of engines, the rattle and clang of tank tracks... Closer, even closer. Now every detail is visible. Their towers are turning because they are looking for us. Roaring, whining and barking shots! Tracers from anti-tank guns reach the enemy with their fiery "fingers". Lower thunder of "assault guns". Five Soviet tanks were literally shredded and torn to pieces ... The remaining Soviet tanks joined the battle and stubbornly fired at our positions through their destroyed and knocked out tanks ...

The raised dust, gunpowder smoke and smoke from burning oil hide us. The Russians fire furiously with machine guns and cannons. The anti-tank gun on the right side of the road was hit. Shards, steel and blood and mud fall on the yellow sand. The Russian tank rolls forward - 40 meters, 30 meters ... Fear chokes the throat. A devastating blow - fire, armor plates, a gun barrel, human bodies, burning oil and dense, black smoke that graciously hides a picture of horror ... The fire subsides because we have no more targets. The last tanks turned around and fled. Eleven burning torches, engulfed in huge columns of smoke, litter the field..." [415]

Without trying to extract too much from this pompous propaganda, it is still worth paying attention to one point - in the painted picture of the battle it is absolutely impossible to make out one and a half to two hundred attacking Soviet tanks, there are clearly fewer of them, only a few dozen. And it's very strange. No propagandist will underestimate the composition of the forces of the defeated enemy, rather the opposite ... In

the operational documents of the Wehrmacht, the battle near Cape Konyukha is described extremely sparingly. In the final report for the day of June 22 of the command of the 9th Army we read: **Grooms; the enemy counterattacks with tanks. [410]** On the morning of June 23, the 8th Army Corps reported that 80 Soviet tanks were knocked out in the battles for Grodno, the evening report (by 22-00 on June 23) increased this number: "The number of **enemy tanks knocked out on 22.06 compared to today's morning reports and by based on the latest data rose to 105-110**". [412] With all reservations regarding

inevitable overestimation of enemy losses, it is impossible not to notice that such numbers of Soviet tanks knocked out in one battle are extremely rare in Wehrmacht documents [134]. It remains to be assumed that the battle at Cape Konyukha was indeed fierce and prolonged (in the propaganda version cited above, it lasts 11 hours), and Colonel Studnev's tankers were desperately trying to complete the task.

In the report of the commander of the 11th MK, the battle that took place on June 22 is described somehow strangely, although quite optimistically: ***“In the very first attacks of our tanks, the enemy suffered heavy losses in tanks (?) And in subsequent battles, when our tanks appeared, he left behind his defending infantry... German tanks after the meeting on June 22 with the 29th TD, having suffered losses of about 30 tanks, were used as anti-tank guns, [acting] from behind masks and shelters.”*** It follows from the report that heavy KV tanks were also departed and involved in the battle near Cape Konyukha (***“2 KV tanks died on the 1st day at the turn south of Sopotskin. One tank capsized and drowned in a swamp, the second was hit in the undercarriage”***). [414] Again, it is strange that H. Slesin does not mention the meeting with the Soviet armored giants in any way - although such a plot would greatly decorate his dramatic story about the battle near Cape Konyukha. There is still much unclear in the specific details of that battle, but the end result is beyond doubt - the Germans failed to capture Grodno on the move,

on the first day of the offensive. Unfortunately, the half-day won at a high price was not properly used to prepare for the defense of the city. Despite the categorical order of the Military Council of the Western Front (***“Commander of the 3rd Army. You must hold Grodno firmly by all means”***), the headquarters of the 3rd Army moved to Lunno (40 km to the southeast) late in the evening of June 22. Huge military depots in Grodno were lost, at best they were blown up. So, on June 25, the head of the operational department of the headquarters of the Polar Front, Major General Semenov, reported to Moscow: ***“I confirm the explosion of artillery warehouse No. 856 in Grodno. The arson of the warehouse [with] a subsequent explosion from the fire was carried out by the head of the warehouse on the orders of the commander of the 3rd Army. The warehouse was not damaged by the bombing, it is known that in total 10-12 wagons of ammunition were issued to the troops from the warehouse, the rest, up to 250 wagons, were destroyed. [443]***

During the disorderly retreat, the bridges across the Neman were not even properly destroyed. The final operational summary of the headquarters of the 8th AK Wehrmacht for June 23 states: ***“The automobile bridge in Grodno, slightly damaged, again***

restored and able to withstand loads of up to 16 tons ... the middle span was blown up near the railway bridge in Grodno, the bridge supports are intact. The operational summary of the headquarters of the 8th Infantry Division from 22-00 on June 23 contains the following, possibly controversial, judgment: **"Based on the fact that the important [transport] hub Grodno is no longer defended by the enemy's rearguard, and the explosion of the bridge, apparently, was carried out casually, it can be concluded that during yesterday's day, the morale of the enemy began to decline. It seems that our yesterday's success had a greater impact on the Russian command than on the stamina of individual Russian soldiers ... "** [412]

The concept of the

operation By the end of the day on June 22, the following situation had developed in the zone of the Western Front. To the north of Grodno, the enemy (161st Infantry Division, 28th Infantry Division) crossed the Neman and developed an offensive to the east, encountering practically no organized resistance. In the Grodno region, the offensive of the German 8th Infantry Division was halted by a counterattack by the 29th Panzer Division, while the 85th Infantry Division was able to retreat to the line of the Lososna River in a relatively organized manner. The 256th Infantry Division of the 20th Army Corps of the Wehrmacht, having thrown the 27th Infantry Division to the south bank of the river. Biebrzh, occupied Dombrova and Novy Dvor; as noted in the corps's ZhBD, **"with the exception of the battles for pillboxes at Krasne, our losses are very small compared to the success achieved."** [411] The successes of the 162nd Infantry Division were not so impressive - in a heavy battle for many hours (**"the enemy stubbornly defends his positions in pillboxes and uses snipers in the**

trees"), the Germans crossed the August canal and occupied the city of Augustow by evening. Along the northern contour of the "Bialystok ledge", the enemy limited himself to holding down actions, while one of the three divisions of 42 AK had not yet crossed the border, the other two advanced several kilometers deep into Soviet territory, having two rifle divisions in front of them (2nd and 8th) and one cavalry (6th cd) division of the Red Army. Along the southern contour of the "Bialystok ledge" 9 infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht, having thrown back 4 Soviet rifle divisions (13, 86, 113, 49) from the border, successfully developed the offensive in the northeast direction. On the line Brest, Kobrin, the c

Such was the situation in reality. The information that the command of the Western Front had at that time did not correspond to reality in two important points: the concentration of the most powerful tank grouping of the enemy (2nd TGr) was not revealed

on the Brest direction and, on the contrary, two non-existent tank divisions advancing on Belsk were "discovered". Finally, in the late evening of June 22, Directive No. 3 of the Main Military Council of the spacecraft arrived at the front headquarters from Moscow, which set the task of **"holding back the enemy in the Warsaw direction, delivering a powerful counterattack with the forces of at least two mechanized corps and front aviation to the flank and rear of the enemy's Suwalki grouping, destroy it together with the North-Western Front and by the end of June 24, capture the Suwalki area.**

[99] The matter was not limited to sending the directive, **"late in the evening of June 22, Marshal of the Soviet Union comrade Shaposhnikov and Marshal of the Soviet Union comrade Kulik arrived at the front headquarters. Marshal Kulik left for the 10th Army, where earlier at about 12.00 he left to lead the actions of the 6th MK and 6th**

CC of the castle troops, Lieutenant General I.V. Boldin. [416] The available documents do not allow us to determine exactly when (before or after the receipt of Directive No. 3) the decision was made to attack Grodno by the cavalry-mechanized group (KMG) and whether there was in reality an order from the front command to launch a counterattack in the opposite direction, south to Belsk. In any case, Opersvodka No. 2 of the headquarters of the 10th Army dated 09.00 on June 23 confirms that there was no actual advancement of divisions of the 6th MK to the south: **"The 6th mechanized corps on the night of 23.6. a motorized division occupies a line for defense along the river. Lososna on the Kuznitsa front, Sokulka on the northwest front, the 4th and 7th Panzer Divisions concentrated in the forest area north of Grudek. [417]**

It should also be noted that already on the afternoon of June 22, without waiting and without having sanctioned from Moscow, the command of the Western Front decided to withdraw units of the 10th Army 60–80 km from the border, to the line of the river. Narew. In the above-mentioned report (certificate) of the Chief of Staff of the 10th Army, Major General Lyapin, this is stated quite specifically: **"The order to withdraw to the river. Narew was received from the NSH Front by Klimovskikh by General Lyapin by HF phone with the following content: "Take everyone to Narew on the night of 23.6." The time of receipt of this order is between 14 and 16 June 22. "** [418]

Opersvodka No. 2 of the headquarters of the 10th Army states that **"parts of the army retreated to the eastern bank of the river during the night. Narew, hiding behind the darkness of the night.** It is far from a fact that this message is true in everything (in the beginning chaos, the order to withdraw troops might not have reached the relevant headquarters), but there is no doubt that Pavlov quickly and independently made a decision adequate to the situation [135].